THE ROMANCES OF

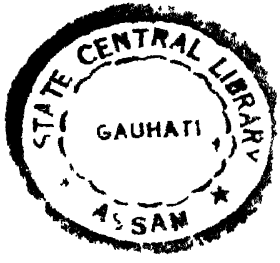
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Handy Library Edition

The D'Artagnan Romances

VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE

VOLUME ONE


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THE · ROMANCES · OF
ALEXANDRE · DUMAS

VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE

VOLUME ONE

BOSTON
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE "Vicomte de Bragelonne," the longest and in many respects the most powerful of the D'Artagnan series, was first presented to the English-speaking public in an unabridged translation, conforming to the author's own arrangement and in readable form, by the present publishers. Owing to its great length it had previously been translated only in an abridged form. Detached portions of it, too, have appeared from time to time. The chapters devoted to Mademoiselle de la Vallière have been published separately under the title of "Louise de la Vallière," while what is commonly known as "The Iron Mask" is a translation of that portion of Bragelonne which relates the attempted substitution of the Bastille prisoner for Louis XIV.

The romance, as it was written and as it is here presented in English, offers a marvellously faithful picture of the French court from a period immediately preceding the young king's marriage to his cousin, Maria Theresa, the Infante of Spain, to the

downfall of Fouquet. This period was a momentous one for France, embracing as it did the diplomatic triumph of Mazarin in the advantageous Treaty of the Pyrenees; the death of that avaricious and unscrupulous, but eminently able and far-seeing, minister and cardinal; the assumption of power by Louis in person; and the rise to high office and influence over the crushed and disgraced Fouquet, of Jean-Baptiste Colbert. These two years marked the beginning of the most brilliant epoch of court life in France, as well as of her greatest, if somewhat factitious, glory both at home and abroad.

The historical accuracy of the author of "Bragelonne" — which Miss Pardoe, in her justly popular and entertaining work on Louis XIV., and the historian Michelet as well, have so strongly maintained — is perhaps more striking in this than in any other of his romances. It is not only in the matter of the events of greater or less importance that one familiar with the history of the period seems to be reading some contemporary chronicle, but the character-sketches of the prominent personages are drawn with such entire fidelity to life that we seem to see the very men and women themselves as they appeared to their contemporaries.

Thus it is with the king, whose intense egotism was beginning to develop, being unceasingly fostered by the flattery of those who surrounded him and told him that he was the greatest of men and

kings, invincible in arms and unequalled in wisdom; who was rapidly reaching that state of sublime self-sufficiency which led to the famous saying: "L'État, c'est moi;" but who was, nevertheless, more bashful and timid and humble at the feet of the gentle and retiring La Vallière than if she had been the greatest queen in Christendom.

Of his favorites La Vallière was the only one who loved him for himself alone, and she has come down to us as one of the few Frenchwomen who have ever been ashamed of being known as a king's mistress. Her life is faithfully sketched in these pages, from her first glimpse of the king at Blois, when she gave her heart to him unasked. When the scheme was formed to use her as a cloak for the king's flirtation with Madame Henriette, "there was a rumor connecting her name with that of a certain Vicomte de Bragelonne, who had caused her young heart to utter its first sighs in Blois; but the most malicious gossips spoke of it only as a childish flame, — that is to say, utterly without importance."

Mademoiselle de Montalais made herself notorious as a go-between in various love affairs, while Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, otherwise Mademoiselle de Rochechouart-Mortemart, clever and beautiful, was destined, as Madame de Montespan, to supplant her modest friend in the affections of their lord and master; and after a career of unexampled brilliancy to be herself supplanted by the

governess of her legitimated children, the widow Scarron, better known as Madame la Marquise de Maintenon.

"Une maîtresse tonnante et triomphante," Madame de Sévigné calls Madame de Montespan. The Mortemart family was supposed to be of the greatest antiquity and to have the same origin as the English Mortimers. The *esprit de Mortemart*, or Mortemart wit, was reputed to be an inalienable characteristic of the race. And what of Madame herself, who played a part at the court of France which was almost exactly duplicated forty years later by her granddaughter, the Savoy princess, who became Duchesse de Bourgogne, and whose untimely death was one of the most severe of the many domestic afflictions which darkened the last years of the old king's life? Let us listen for a moment to Robert Louis Stevenson, writing of the "Vicomte de Bragelonne" after his fifth or sixth perusal of it: —

"Madame enchants me. I can forgive that royal minx her most serious offences; I can thrill and soften with the king on that memorable occasion when he goes to upbraid and remains to flirt; and when it comes to the 'Allons, aimez-moi donc,' it is my heart that melts in the bosom of De Guiche."

The mutual passion of De Guiche and Madame lasted all her life, we are told; and yet, alas! it was but short-lived, for Madame's days were numbered. She died in 1670, after an illness of but a few hours

regretted by everybody except her husband. There is little doubt that she was poisoned through the instrumentality of the Chevalier de Lorraine, and probably with the connivance of Monsieur, whose favorite he was. The Chevalier was a prodigy of vice, and one of the most unsavory characters of the period.

The greed and avarice of Mazarin were his most prominent characteristics; they are illustrated by innumerable anecdotes, one of which may perhaps be repeated here: He had been informed that a pamphlet was about to be put on sale, in which he was shamefully libelled, he confiscated it, and of course the market price of it at once increased enormously; whereupon he sold it secretly at an exorbitant figure and allowed it to circulate, pocketing a thousand pistoles as his share of the transaction. He used to tell of this himself, and laugh heartily over it. His supreme power had endured so long that everybody desired his death, and his contemporaries hardly did justice to the very solid benefits he had procured for France.

In drawing the characters of Fouquet and Colbert, Dumas has perhaps, as Mr. Stevenson says, shown an inclination to enlist his reader's sympathies for the former against his own judgment of the equities of the case.

"Historic justice," says the essayist, "should be all upon the side of Colbert, of official honesty and

fiscal competence. And Dumas knows it well; three times at least he shows his knowledge, — once it is but flashed upon us and received with the laughter of Fouquet himself, in the jesting controversy in the gardens of Saint-Mandé; once it is touched on by Aramis in the forest of Sénart; in the end it is set before us clearly in one dignified speech of the triumphant Colbert. But in Fouquet — the master, the lover of good cheer and wit and art, the swift transactor of much business, *l'homme de bruit, l'homme de plaisir, l'homme qui n'est que parceque les autres sont* — Dumas saw something of himself, and drew the figure the more tenderly; it is to me even touching to see how he insists on Fouquet's honor."

The grand fête at Vaux was the last straw which made the superintendent's downfall absolutely certain. "If his disgrace had not already been determined upon in the king's mind, it would have been at Vaux . . . As there was but one sun in heaven, there could be but one king in France."

It is interesting to read that the execution of the order for Fouquet's arrest was entrusted to one *D'Artagnan*, Captain of Musketeers, "a man of action, entirely unconnected with all the cabals, and who, during his thirty-three years' experience in the Musketeers, had never known anything outside of his orders."

Fouquet lived nearly twenty years in prison,

and died in 1680. He has been connected in various ways with the "Man with the Iron Mask," some investigators having maintained that he was identical with that individual, and therefore could not have died in 1680; while others have claimed that the Iron Mask was imprisoned at the Château of Pignerol while Fouquet was there. The legend of the unfortunate prisoner has given rise to much investigation and to many conjectures. Voltaire bent his energies to solve the mystery, and in our own day M. Marius Topin has gone into the subject most exhaustively, but without reaching a satisfactory conclusion as to the identity of the sufferer. The somewhat audacious use made of the legend by Dumas is based upon what was at one time a favorite solution; namely, that the unknown was a brother of Louis XIV., said by some to have been a twin, and by others to have been some years older and of doubtful paternity.

It would be an endless task to cite all the portions of these volumes in which historical facts are related with substantial accuracy; in them fact and fiction are so blended that each enhances the charm of the other, — the element of authenticity adding zest and interest to the romantic portions, while the element of romance gives life and color to the narration of facts.

Our old friends of the earlier tales bear us company nearly to the end; but for the first time,

political interests are allowed to interfere with the perfect confidence that has existed between them: Aramis, as General of the Jesuits, is true to the reputation of the order, and hesitates at no dissimulation to gain his ambitious ends. Porthos, still blindly faithful to that one of his friends who claims his allegiance, falls at last a victim to his childlike trust in the scheming prelate, and dies the death of a veritable Titan. The magnificent outburst of righteous anger which the Comte de la Fère visits upon the king is the last expiring gleam of the spirit of the Athos of the Musketeers. Wrapped up in his love for the heart-broken Bragelonne, he lives only in his life and "dies in his death."

And D'Artagnan? His praises and his requiem have been most fittingly and lovingly sounded by the same graceful writer who has already been quoted, and in the same essay, entitled "Gossip upon a Novel of Dumas," —

"It is in the character of D'Artagnan that we must look for that spirit of morality which is one of the chief merits of the book, makes one of the main joys of its perusal, and sets it high above more popular rivals. . . . He has mellowed into a man so witty, rough, kind, and upright that he takes the heart by storm. There is nothing of the copy-book about his virtues, nothing of the drawing-room in his fine natural civility; he will sail near the wind; he is no district

visitor, no Wesley or Robespierre; his conscience is void of all refinement, whether for good or evil; but the whole man rings true like a good sovereign. . . . Here and throughout, if I am to choose virtues for myself or my friends, let me choose the virtues of D'Artagnan. I do not say that there is no character as well drawn in Shakespeare; I do say there is none that I love so wholly. . . . No part of the world has ever seemed to me so charming as these pages; and not even my friends are quite so real, perhaps quite so dear, as D'Artagnan."

Of the great closing chapters of the book, in which the friends are at last separated by death, D'Artagnan falling on the battle-field just as he was about to grasp the coveted prize of the baton of a marshal of France, Stevenson says: —

"I can recall no other work of the imagination in which the end of life is represented with so nice a tact; . . . and above all, in the last volume, I find a singular charm of spirit. It breathes a pleasant and a tonic sadness, always brave, never hysterical. Upon the crowded, noisy life of this long tale, evening gradually falls, and the lights are extinguished, and the heroes pass away one by one. One by one they go, and not a regret embitters their departure. The young succeed them in their places. Louis Quatorze is swelling larger and shining broader; another generation and another France dawn on the horizon, — but for us and these old men whom we have loved so long, the inevitable end draws near and is welcome. To read this well is to

anticipate experience. Ah! if only when these hours of the long shadows fall for us in reality and not in figure, we may hope to face them with a mind as quiet. But my paper is running out; the siege-guns are firing on the Dutch frontier, and I must say adieu for the fifth time to my old comrade, fallen on the field of glory. Adieu, rather *au revoir!* Yet a sixth time, dearest D'Artagnan, we shall kidnap Monk and take horse together for Belle Isle."

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1660–1671.

Louis XIV., King of France.
Maria Theresa, his Queen.
Anne of Austria, the Queen Mother.
Gaston of Orléans, uncle of the King.
Duchesse d'Orléans,
Philippe, Duc d'Anjou, brother of the King, afterwards Duc d'Orléans.
Henrietta of England, his wife.
Cardinal Mazarin.
Bernouin, his valet.
Brienne, his secretary.
M. le Duc de Beaufort.
Prince de Condé.
Chevalier de Lorraine, favorite of Philippe d'Orléans.
Comte de Saint-Aignan, attending on the King.
Mademoiselle Marie de Mancini, niece of Cardinal Mazarin.
Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais,
Mlle. Athenaise de Tonnay-Charente, afterwards Madame de Montespan,
Mademoiselle Louise de la Vallière,
} Maids of Honor to Henrietta, Duchesse d'Orléans.
La Molina, Anne of Austria's Spanish nurse.
Duchesse de Chevreuse.
Madame de Motteville,
Madame de Navailles,
Mademoiselle de Châtillon,
Comtesse de Soissons,
Mademoiselle Arnoux,
} ladies of the French Court.

LOUISE DE KÉROUALLE, afterwards Duchess of Portsmouth.
MARÉCHAL GRAMMONT.
COMTE DE GUICHE, his son, in love with Madame Henrietta.
M. DE MANICAMP, friend of the Comte de Guiche.
M. DE MALICORNE, in love with Mademoiselle de Montalais.
M. D'ARTAGNAN, Lieutenant, afterwards Captain, of the King's Musketeers
COMTE DE LA FÈRE (Athos)
RAOUL, VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE, his son.
M. D'HERBLAY, afterwards Bishop of Vannes, General of the Order of Jesuits, and Duc d'Alaméda (Aramis).
BARON DU VALLON DE BRACIEUX DE PIERREFONDS (Porthos)
JEAN POQUELIN DE MOLIÈRE.
VICOMTE DE WARDES
M. DE VILLEROY
M. DE FOUQUET, Superintendent of Finance.
MADAME FOUQUET, his wife.
MESSIEURS LIONNE AND LETELLIER, Fouquet's associates in the ministry.
MARQUISE DE BELLIÈRE, in love with Fouquet.
M. DE LA FONTAINE,
M. GOURVILLE,
M. PELLISSON,
M. CONRART,
M. LORET,
} friends of Fouquet.
L'ABBÉ FOUQUET, brother of the Superintendent.
M. VANEL, a Councillor of Parliament, afterwards Procureur-Général.
MARGUERITE VANEL, his wife, a rival of la Marquise de la Bellière.
M. DE SAINT-REMY, maître-hotel to Gaston of Orléans.
MADAME DE SAINT-REMY.
JEAN-BAPTISTE COLBERT, Intendant of Finance, afterwards Prime Minister.
MESSIEURS D'INFREVILLE, DESTOUCHES, AND FORANT, in Colbert's service.

MESSIEURS BRETEUIL, MARIN, AND HAVARD, colleagues of Colbert.
MESSIEURS D'EYMERIS, LYODOT, AND VANIN, Farmers-General
M. DE BAISEMAUX DE MONTLEZUN, Governor of the Bastille.
SELDON, a prisoner at the Bastille.
No 3, BERTAUDIÈRE, afterwards "The Iron Mask."
M. DE SAINT-MARS, Governor of Ile Sainte Marguerite.
A FRANCISCAN FRIAR, General of the Order of Jesuits.
BARON VON WOSTPUR, } Jesuits.
MONSEIGNEUR HERREBIA, } Jesuits.
MEINHEER BONSTETT, } Jesuits.
SIGNOR MARINI, } Jesuits.
LORD MACCUMNOR, } Jesuits.
GRISART, a physician. } Jesuits.
LOUIS CONSTANT DE PRESSIGNY, Captain of the King's Frigate "Pomona." } Jesuits.
M. DE GESVRES, Captain of the King's Guards.
M. DE BISCARRAT, an officer of the King's Guards.
M. DE FRIEDRICH, an officer of the Swiss Guards.
MESSIRE JEAN PERCERIN, the King's tailor.
M. VALOT, the King's physician.
PLANCHET, a confectioner in the Rue des Lombards
MADAME GECHTER, his housekeeper.
DADDY CÉLESTIN, Planchet's servant.
BAZIN, servant to M. d'Herblay.
GRIMAUD, an old servant of Athos.
MOUSQUETON, servant of Porthos.
BLASOIS, servant to Athos.
OLIVAIN, servant of Vicomte de Bragelonne.
JUPENET, a printer, } in the service of Fouquet.
GÉTARD, an architect, } in the service of Fouquet.
DANICAMP, } in the service of Fouquet.
MENNEVILLE, an adventurer.
M. LEBRUN, painter.
M. FAUCHEUX, a goldsmith.

VATEL, Fouquet's steward.
TOBY, one of Fouquet's servants.
YVES, a sailor.
KEYSER, a Dutch fisherman.
MAÎTRE CROPOLE, of the hostelry of the Medici at Blois.
PITTRINO, his assistant.
MADAME CROPOLE.
LANDLORD OF THE BEAU PAON HOTEL
SUPERIOR OF THE CARMELITE CONVENT AT CHAILLOT.
GUÉNAUD, Mazarin's physician.
THE THÉATIN FATHER, The Cardinal's spiritual director.

ENGLISH.

CHARLES II., King of England.
PARRY, his servant.
GENERAL MONK, afterwards Duke of Albemarle.
DIGBY, his aide-de-camp.
GENERAL LAMBERT.
JAMES, Duke of York, brother of Charles II.
GEORGE VILLIERS, Duke of Buckingham.
LORD ROCHESTER.
DUKE OF NORFOLK.
MISS MARY GRAFTON.
MISS STEWART.
HOST OF THE STAG'S HORN TAVERN

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Drawn and etched by E. Van Muydan.

THE

VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LETTER.

Towards the middle of the month of May, in the year 1660, at nine o'clock in the morning, when the sun, already high in the heavens, was fast absorbing the dew from the wall-flowers of the castle of Blois, a little cavalcade, composed of three men and two pages, re-entered the city by the bridge, without producing any effect upon the passengers on the quay beyond a first movement of the hand to the head as a salute, and a second movement of the tongue to say, in the purest French then spoken in France, "There is Monsieur returning from hunting;" and that was all.

While, however, the horses were climbing the steep acclivity which leads from the river to the castle, several shop-boys approached the last horse, from whose saddle bow a number of birds were suspended by the beak.

On seeing this the inquisitive youths manifested with rustic freedom their contempt for such paltry sport; and after a dissertation among themselves upon the disadvantages of hawking, they returned to their occupations. One only of the curious party — a stout, chubby, cheerful lad — demanded how it was that Monsieur, who,

from his great revenues, had it in his power to amuse himself so much better, could be satisfied with such mean diversions.

"Do you not know," one of the standers-by replied, "that Monsieur's principal amusement is to weary himself?"

The light hearted boy shrugged his shoulders with a gesture which said as clear as day, "In that case I would rather be plain Jack than a prince;" and all resumed their labors.

In the mean while Monsieur continued his route with an air at once so melancholy and so majestic that he certainly would have attracted the attention of spectators, if spectators there had been; but the good citizens of Blois could not pardon Monsieur for having chosen their gay city for an abode in which to indulge melancholy at his ease; and as often as they caught a glimpse of the illustrious *ennuyé*, they stole away gaping, or drew back their heads into the interior of their dwellings, to escape the soporific influence of that long, pale face, of those watery eyes and that languid address; so that the worthy prince was almost certain to find the streets deserted whenever he chanced to pass through them.

Now, on the part of the citizens of Blois this was a culpable piece of disrespect; for Monsieur was, after the king, — nay, even, perhaps before the king, — the greatest noble of the kingdom. In fact, God, who had granted to Louis XIV., then reigning, the honor of being son of Louis XIII., had granted to Monsieur the honor of being son of Henry IV. It was not, then, or at least it ought not to have been, a trifling source of pride for the city of Blois, that Gaston of Orléans had chosen it as his residence, and held his court in the ancient Castle of the States.

But it was the destiny of this great prince to excite the attention and admiration of the public in a very modified degree wherever he might be. Monsieur had fallen into this situation by habit.

It was not, perhaps, this which gave him that air of listlessness. Monsieur had been tolerably busy in the course of his life. A man cannot allow the heads of a dozen of his best friends to be cut off without feeling a little excitement; and as since the accession of Mazarin to power no heads had been cut off, Monsieur's occupation was gone, and his *morale* suffered from it.

The life of the poor prince was, then, very dull. After his little morning hawking party on the banks of the Beuvron or in the woods of Chiverny, Monsieur crossed the Loire, went to breakfast at Chambord, with or without an appetite, and the city of Blois heard no more of its sovereign lord and master till the next hawking-day.

So much for the ennui *extra muros;* of the ennui of the interior we will give the reader an idea if he will with us follow the cavalcade to the majestic porch of the Castle of the States.

Monsieur rode a little steady-paced horse, equipped with a large saddle of red Flemish velvet, with stirrups in the shape of buskins; the horse was of a bay color; Monsieur's doublet of crimson velvet blended with the cloak of the same shade and the horse's equipment; and it was only by this red appearance of the whole that the prince could be known from his two companions, the one dressed in violet, the other in green. He on the left, in violet, was his equerry; he on the right, in green, was the master of the hounds.

One of the pages carried two gerfalcons upon a perch; the other, a hunting-horn, which he blew with a careless

note at twenty paces from the castle. Every one about this listless prince did what he had to do listlessly.

At this signal, eight guards, who were lounging in the sun in the square court, ran to their halberds, and Monsieur made his solemn entry into the castle.

When he had disappeared under the shades of the porch, three or four idlers, who had followed the cavalcade to the castle, after pointing out the suspended birds to each other, dispersed with comments upon what they saw; and when they were gone, the street, the place, and the court, all remained deserted alike.

Monsieur dismounted without speaking a word, went straight to his apartments, where his valet changed his dress, and, as Madame had not yet sent orders respecting breakfast, stretched himself upon a lounge, and was soon as fast asleep as if it had been eleven o'clock at night.

The eight guards, who concluded their service for the day was over, laid themselves down very comfortably in the sun upon some stone benches; the grooms disappeared with their horses into the stables; and, with the exception of a few joyous birds, startling each other with their sharp chirping in the tufts of gilliflowers, it might have been thought that the whole castle was as soundly asleep as Monsieur was.

All at once, in the midst of this delicious silence, there resounded a clear, ringing laugh, which caused several of the halberdiers in the enjoyment of their siesta to open at least one eye.

This burst of laughter proceeded from a window of the castle, visited at this moment by the sun, which surrounded it with light in one of those large angles which the profiles of the chimneys mark out upon the walls before midday.

The little balcony of wrought-iron which projected in front of this window was furnished with a pot of red gilliflowers, another pot of primroses, and an early rose-tree, the foliage of which, beautifully green, was variegated with numerous red specks announcing future roses.

In the chamber lighted by this window was a square table covered with an old large-flowered Haarlem tapestry; in the centre of this table was a long-necked stone bottle, in which were irises and lilies of the valley; at each end of this table was a young girl.

The position of these two young persons was singular; they might have been taken for two boarders escaped from a convent. One of them, with both elbows on the table, and a pen in her hand, was tracing characters upon a sheet of fine Dutch paper; the other, kneeling upon a chair, which enabled her to advance her head and bust over the back of it to the middle of the table, was watching her companion as she wrote.

Thence the thousand cries, the thousand railleries, the thousand laughs, one of which, more brilliant than the rest, had startled the birds from the wall-flowers, and disturbed the slumbers of Monsieur's guards.

We are taking portraits now; we shall be allowed, therefore, we hope, to sketch the last two of this chapter.

The one who was kneeling in the chair — that is to say, the joyous, the laughing one — was a beautiful girl of from nineteen to twenty years, with brown complexion and brown hair, with eyes which sparkled beneath strongly marked brows, and teeth which seemed to shine like pearls between her red coral lips. Her every movement seemed the result of a springing mine; she did not live, she bounded.

The other — she who was writing — looked at her tur-

bulent companion with an eye as limpid, as pure, and as blue as the heaven of that day. Her hair, of a shaded fairness, arranged with exquisite taste, fell in silky curls over her lovely mantling cheeks; she moved along the paper a delicate hand, whose thinness announced her extreme youth. At each burst of laughter that proceeded from her friend she raised, as if annoyed, her white shoulders, which were of refined and pleasing form, but wanting in strength and fulness, as were also her arms and hands.

"Montalais! Montalais!" said she at length, in a voice soft and caressing as a melody, "you laugh too loud; you laugh like a man. You will not only draw the attention of messieurs the guards, but you will not hear Madame's bell when Madame rings."

This admonition did not make the young girl called Montalais cease either to laugh or to gesticulate. She only replied: "Louise, you do not speak as you think, my dear; you know that messieurs the guards, as you call them, have only just begun their sleep, and that a cannon would not waken them; you know that Madame's bell can be heard at the bridge of Blois, and that consequently I shall hear it when my services are required by Madame. What annoys you, my child, is that I laugh while you are writing; and what you are afraid of is that Madame de Saint-Remy, your mother, will come up here, as she does sometimes when we laugh too loud; that she will surprise us, and that she will see that enormous sheet of paper upon which, in a quarter of an hour, you have only traced the words 'Monsieur Raoul.' Now, you are right, my dear Louise, because after these words, 'Monsieur Raoul,' others may be put so significant and so incendiary as to cause Madame de Saint-Remy to burst out into fire and flames. Ah! is not that true now?—say."

And Montalais redoubled her laughter and noisy provocations.

The fair girl at length became quite angry; she tore the sheet of paper on which, in fact, the words "Monsieur Raoul" were written in good characters, and crushing the paper in her trembling hands, threw it out of the window.

"There, there!" said Mademoiselle de Montalais; "there is our little lamb, our gentle dove, angry! Don't be afraid, Louise! Madame de Saint-Remy will not come; and if she should, you know I have a quick ear. Besides, what can be more permissible than to write to an old friend of twelve years' standing, particularly when the letter begins with the words 'Monsieur Raoul'?"

"It is all very well; I will not write to him at all," said the young girl.

"Ah! ah! in good sooth, Montalais is properly punished," cried the jeering brunette, still laughing. "Come, come, let us try another sheet of paper, and finish our despatch off-hand. Good! there is the bell ringing now. By my faith, so much the worse! Madame must wait, or else do without her first maid of honor this morning."

A bell, in fact, did ring; it announced that Madame had finished her toilette, and waited for Monsieur to give her his hand and conduct her from the salon to the refectory.

This formality being accomplished with great ceremony, the husband and wife breakfasted, and then separated till the hour of dinner, invariably fixed at two o'clock.

The sound of this bell caused a door to be opened in the offices on the left hand of the court, from which filed two *maîtres d'hôtel*, followed by eight scullions bearing a

kind of hand-barrow loaded with dishes under silver covers.

One of the *maîtres d'hôtel*, the first in rank, touched one of the guards, who was snoring on his bench, slightly with his wand; he even carried his kindness so far as to place the halberd which stood against the wall in the hands of the man, stupid with sleep; after which the soldier, without explanation, escorted the *viande* of Monsieur to the refectory, preceded by a page and the two *maîtres d'hôtel*.

Wherever the *viande* passed, the sentinels presented arms.

Mademoiselle de Montalais and her companion had watched from their window the details of this ceremony, to which, nevertheless, they must have been pretty well accustomed. But they did not look so much from curiosity as to be assured that they should not be disturbed. So, guards, scullions, *maîtres d'hôtel*, and pages having passed, they resumed their places at the table; and the sun, which through the window-frame had for an instant fallen upon those two charming countenances, now shed its light only upon the gilliflowers, primroses, and rose-tree.

"Bah!" said Mademoiselle de Montalais, taking her place again; "Madame will breakfast very well without me."

"Oh, Montalais, you will be punished!" replied the other girl, sitting down quietly in hers.

"Punished, indeed! — that is to say, deprived of a ride! That is just the way in which I wish to be punished. To go out in the grand coach perched upon a doorstep; to turn to the left, twist round to the right, over roads full of ruts, where we cannot exceed a league in two hours; and then to come back straight towards the wing of the castle in which is the window of Marie de Médicis,

so that Madame never fails to say, 'Could one believe it possible that Queen Marie should have escaped from that window? — forty-seven feet high! The mother and two princes and three princesses!' If you call that relaxation, Louise, all I ask is to be punished every day, particularly when my punishment is to remain with you and write such interesting letters as we write!"

"Montalais! Montalais! there are duties to be performed."

"You talk of them very much at your ease, my little heart! — you, who are left quite free amidst this tedious court. You are the only person that reaps the advantages of them without incurring the trouble, — you, who are really more one of Madame's maids of honor than I am, because Madame makes her affection for your father-in-law glance off upon you; so that you enter this dull house as the birds fly into yonder court, inhaling the air, pecking the flowers, picking up the grain, without having the least service to perform or the least annoyance to undergo. And you talk to me of duties to be performed! In sooth, my pretty idler, what are your own proper duties, unless to write to the handsome Raoul? And even that you don't do; so that it looks to me as if you likewise were rather negligent of your duties!"

Louise assumed a serious air, leaned her chin upon her hand, and said, in a tone full of candid remonstrance: "And do you reproach me with my good fortune? Can you have the heart to do it? You have a future; you belong to the court; the king, if he should marry, will require Monsieur to be near his person; you will see splendid *fêtes;* you will see the king, who they say is so handsome, so agreeable!"

"Ay, and still more, I shall see Raoul, who attends upon Monsieur the Prince," added Montalais, maliciously.

"Poor Raoul!" sighed Louise.

"Now is the time to write to him, my pretty dear! Come, begin again with that famous 'Monsieur Raoul' which figures at the top of the poor torn sheet."

She then held the pen towards her, and with a charming smile encouraged her hand, which quickly traced the words she named.

"What next?" asked the younger of the two girls.

"Why, now write what you think, Louise," replied Montalais.

"Are you quite sure I think of anything?"

"You think of somebody, and that amounts to the same thing, or rather even worse."

"Do you think so, Montalais?"

"Louise, Louise, your blue eyes are as deep as the sea I saw at Boulogne last year! No, no, I mistake — the sea is perfidious: your eyes are as deep as the azure yonder — look! — over our heads!"

"Well, since you can read so well in my eyes, tell me what I am thinking about, Montalais."

"In the first place, you don't think 'Monsieur Raoul;' you think 'My dear Raoul.'"

"Oh —"

"Never blush for such a trifle as that! 'My dear Raoul,' we will say, 'you implore me to write to you at Paris, where you are detained by your attendance on Monsieur the Prince. As you must be very dull there to seek for amusement in the remembrance of a country-girl —'"

Louise rose up suddenly. "No, Montalais," said she, with a smile; "I don't think a word of that. Look, this is what I think;" and she seized the pen boldly, and traced, with a firm hand, the following words: "I should have been very unhappy if your entreaties to obtain a

remembrance of me had been less warm. Everything here reminds me of our early days, which so quickly passed away, which so delightfully flew by, that no others will ever replace the charm of them in my heart."

Montalais, who watched the flying pen, and read, the wrong way upward, as fast as her friend wrote, here interrupted by clapping her hands. "Capital!" cried she; "there is frankness, there is heart, there is style! Show these Parisians, my dear, that Blois is the city for fine language!"

"He knows very well that Blois was a Paradise to me," replied the girl.

"That is exactly what I mean to say; and you speak like an angel."

"I will finish, Montalais;" and she continued as follows. "You often think of me, you say, M. Raoul. I thank you; but that does not surprise me, when I recollect how often our hearts have beaten close to each other."

"Oh! oh!" said Montalais. "Beware, my lamb! You are scattering your wool, and there are wolves about."

Louise was about to reply, when the gallop of a horse resounded under the porch of the castle.

"What is that?" said Montalais, approaching the window. "A handsome cavalier, by my faith!"

"Oh!—Raoul!" exclaimed Louise, who had made the same movement as her friend, and, becoming pale as death, sank back beside her unfinished letter.

"Now, he is a clever lover, upon my word!" cried Montalais; "he arrives just at the proper moment."

"Come away, come away, I implore you!" murmured Louise.

"Bah! he does not know me. Let me see what he has come here for."

CHAPTER II.

THE MESSENGER.

MADEMOISELLE DE MONTALAIS was right; the young cavalier was goodly to look upon.

He was a young man of from twenty-four to twenty-five years of age, tall and slender, wearing gracefully the picturesque military costume of the period. His funnel-shaped boots contained a foot which Mademoiselle de Montalais might not have disowned if she had been disguised as a man. With one of his delicate but nervous hands he checked his horse in the middle of the court, and with the other raised his hat, whose long plumes shaded his at once serious and ingenuous countenance.

The guards, roused by the steps of the horse, awoke, and were on foot in a minute. The young man waited till one of them was close to his saddle-bow; then, stooping towards him, in a clear, distinct voice, which was perfectly audible at the window where the two girls were concealed, "A messenger for his royal Highness," he said.

"Ah, ah!" cried the soldier. "Officer, a messenger!"

But this brave guard knew very well that no officer would appear, seeing that the only one who could have appeared dwelt at the other side of the castle, in an appartement looking into the gardens. So he hastened to add: "The officer, Monsieur, is on his rounds; but in his absence, M. de Saint-Remy, the *maître d'hôtel*, shall be informed."

"M. de Saint-Remy?" repeated the cavalier, slightly blushing.

"Do you know him?"

"Why, yes; but request him, if you please, that my visit be announced to his royal Highness as soon as possible."

"It appears to be pressing," said the guard, as if speaking to himself, but really in the hope of obtaining an answer.

The messenger made an affirmative sign with his head.

"In that case," said the guard, "I will go and seek the *maître d'hôtel* myself."

The young man, in the mean time, dismounted; and while the others observed with curiosity every movement of the fine horse the cavalier rode, the soldier returned.

"Your pardon, young gentleman; but your name, if you please?"

"The Vicomte de Bragelonne, on the part of his Highness M. le Prince de Condé."

The soldier made a profound bow, and, as if the name of the conqueror of Rocroy and Lens had given him wings, stepped lightly up the steps leading to the antechamber.

M. de Bragelonne had not had time to fasten his horse to the iron bars of the railing, when M. de Saint-Remy came running, out of breath, supporting his capacious stomach with one hand, while with the other he cut the air as a fisherman cleaves the waves with his oar.

"Ah, Monsieur the Viscount! You at Blois!" cried he. "Well, that is a wonder! Good-day to you, — good-day, M. Raoul."

"I offer you a thousand respects, M. de Saint-Remy."

"How Madame de la Vall— I mean, how delighted Madame de Saint-Remy will be to see you! But come in.

His royal Highness is at breakfast. Must he be interrupted? Is the matter serious?"

"Yes and no, M. de Saint-Remy. A moment's delay, however, would be disagreeable to his royal Highness."

"If that is the case, we will force the guard, Monsieur the Viscount. Come in. Besides, Monsieur is in an excellent humor to-day. And then, you bring news, do you not?"

"Great news, M. de Saint-Remy."

"And good, I presume?"

"Excellent."

"Come quickly, come quickly, then!" cried the worthy man, putting his dress to rights as he went along.

Raoul followed him, hat in hand, and a little disconcerted at the noise made by his spurs in these immense halls.

As soon as he had disappeared in the interior of the palace, the window of the court was repeopled, and an animated whispering betrayed the emotion of the two girls. They soon appeared to have formed a resolution, for one of the two faces disappeared from the window. This was the brunette; the other remained behind the balcony, concealed by the flowers, watching attentively through the branches the flight of steps by which M. de Bragelonne had entered the castle.

In the mean time the object of so much curiosity continued on his way, following the steps of the *maître d'hôtel*. The noise of quick steps, an odor of wine and viands, a clinking of crystals and plates, warned him that he was coming to the end of his course.

The pages, valets, and officers, assembled in the offices adjoining the refectory, welcomed the new-comer with the proverbial politeness of the country. Some of them

were acquainted with Raoul, and nearly all knew that he came from Paris. It might be said that his arrival for a moment suspended the service. In fact, a page who was pouring out wine for his royal Highness, on hearing the jingling of spurs in the next chamber, turned round like a child, without perceiving that he was continuing to pour out, not into the glass, but upon the table-cloth.

Madame, who was not so preoccupied as her glorious spouse, remarked this distraction of the page. "Well!" exclaimed she.

"Well!" repeated Monsieur; "what is going on then?"

M. de Saint-Remy, whose head had just entered the doorway, took advantage of the moment.

"Why am I to be disturbed?" said Gaston, helping himself to a thick slice of one of the largest salmon that had ever ascended the Loire to be captured between Painbœuf and St. Nazaire.

"There is a messenger from Paris. Oh! but after Monseigneur has breakfasted will do; there is plenty of time."

"From Paris!" cried the prince, letting his fork fall. "A messenger from Paris, do you say? And on whose part does this messenger come?"

"On the part of Monsieur the Prince," said the *maître d'hôtel*, promptly.

Every one knows that the Prince de Condé was so called.

"A messenger from Monsieur the Prince!" said Gaston, with an inquietude that escaped none of the assistants, and consequently redoubled the general curiosity.

Monsieur, perhaps, fancied himself brought back again to the happy times when the opening of a door gave him emotion, when every letter might contain a State secret,

when every message was connected with a dark and complicated intrigue. Perhaps, likewise, that great name of Monsieur the Prince expanded itself, beneath the roofs of Blois, into the proportions of a phantom.

Monsieur pushed away his plate.

"Shall I tell the envoy to wait?" asked M. de Saint-Remy.

A glance from Madame emboldened Gaston, who replied: "No, no; let him come in at once, on the contrary. By the way, who is he?"

"A gentleman of this country, M. le Vicomte de Bragelonne."

"Ah, very well! Introduce him, Saint-Remy, — introduce him."

And when he had let fall these words with his accustomed gravity, Monsieur turned his eyes, in a certain manner, upon the people of his suite; so that all — pages, officers, and equerries — quitted the table-linen, knives, and goblets, and made a retreat towards the second chamber as rapid as it was disorderly.

This little army had dispersed in two files when Raoul de Bragelonne, preceded by M. de Saint-Remy, entered the refectory.

The short moment of solitude which this retreat had left him, afforded Monsieur time to assume a diplomatic countenance. He did not turn round, but waited till the *maître d'hôtel* should bring the messenger face to face with him.

Raoul stopped even with the lower end of the table, so as to be exactly between Monsieur and Madame. From this place he made a profound bow to Monsieur, and a very humble one to Madame; then, drawing himself up into military *pose*, he waited for Monsieur to address him.

On his part the prince waited till the doors were hermetically closed. He would not turn round to ascertain the fact, as that would have been derogatory to his dignity; but he listened with all his ears for the noise of the lock, which would promise him at least an appearance of secrecy.

The doors being closed, Monsieur raised his eyes towards the viscount, and said, "It appears that you come from Paris, Monsieur?"

"This minute, Monseigneur."

"How is the king?"

"His Majesty is in perfect health, Monseigneur."

"And my sister-in-law?"

"Her Majesty the queen-mother still suffers from the complaint in her lungs, but for the last month she has been rather better."

"Somebody told me you came on the part of Monsieur the Prince. They must have been mistaken, surely?"

"No, Monseigneur; Monsieur the Prince has charged me to convey this letter to your royal Highness, and I am to wait for an answer to it."

Raoul had been a little annoyed by this cold and cautious reception, and his voice insensibly sank to a low key

The prince forgot that he was the cause of this mystery, and his fears returned.

He received the letter from the Prince de Condé with a haggard look, unsealed it as he would have unsealed a suspicious packet, and, in order to read it so that no one should remark the effects of it upon his countenance, turned round.

Madame followed, with an anxiety almost equal to that of the prince, every manœuvre of her august husband.

Raoul, impassible, and a little disengaged by the preoccupation of his hosts, looked from his place through

the open window at the gardens and the statues which peopled them.

"Well!" cried Monsieur, all at once, with a cheerful smile; "here is an agreeable surprise, and a charming letter from Monsieur the Prince. Look, Madame!"

The table was too large to allow the arm of the prince to reach the hand of Madame. Raoul sprang forward to be their intermediary, and did it with so good a grace as to procure a flattering acknowledgment from the princess.

"You know the contents of this letter, no doubt?" said Gaston to Raoul.

"Yes, Monseigneur; Monsieur the Prince at first gave me the message verbally, but upon reflection his Highness took up his pen."

"It is beautiful writing," said Madame, "but I cannot read it."

"Will you read it to Madame, M. de Bragelonne?" said the duke.

"Yes; read it, if you please, Monsieur."

Raoul began to read, Monsieur giving again all his attention. The letter was couched in these terms.

"Monseigneur, — The king is about to set out for the frontier. You are aware that the marriage of his Majesty is decided upon. The king has done me the honor to appoint me his quartermaster for this journey; and as I know with what joy his Majesty would pass a day at Blois, I venture to ask your royal Highness's permission to mark with my chalk the house you inhabit. If, however, the suddenness of this request should occasion your royal Highness any embarrassment, I entreat you to say so by the messenger I send, — a gentleman of my suite, M. le Vicomte de Bragelonne. My itinerary will depend upon your royal Highness's determination, and, instead of passing through Blois, we shall come through Vendôme and Romorantin. I venture to hope

that your royal Highness will receive my request kindly, — it being the expression of my boundless devotion, and desire to make myself agreeable to you."

"Nothing can be more gracious towards us," said Madame, who had more than once consulted her husband's expression during the reading of the letter. "The king here!" exclaimed she, in a rather louder tone than would have been necessary to preserve secrecy.

"Monsieur," said his royal Highness in his turn, "you will offer my thanks to M. le Prince de Condé, and express to him my gratitude for the pleasure he has done me." Raoul bowed.

"On what day will his Majesty arrive?" continued the prince.

"The king, Monseigneur, will, in all probability, arrive this evening."

"But how, then, could he have known my reply if it had been in the negative?"

"I was desired, Monseigneur, to return in all haste to Beaugency, to give counter-orders to the courier, who was himself to go back immediately with counter-orders to Monsieur the Prince."

"His Majesty is at Orléans, then?"

"Much nearer, Monseigneur; his Majesty must by this time have arrived at Meung."

"Does the court accompany him?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"*Apropos*, I forgot to ask you after Monsieur the Cardinal."

"His Eminence appears to enjoy good health, Monseigneur."

"His nieces accompany him, no doubt?"

"No, Monseigneur; his Eminence has ordered the

Mesdemoiselles de Mancini to set out for Brouage. They will follow the left bank of the Loire, while the court will come by the right."

"What! Mademoiselle Marie de Mancini quit the court in that manner?" asked Monsieur, his reserve beginning to diminish.

"Mademoiselle Marie de Mancini in particular," replied Raoul, discreetly.

A fugitive smile, an imperceptible vestige of his ancient spirit of intrigue, shot across the pale face of the prince.

"Thanks, M. de Bragelonne," then said Monsieur. "You would, perhaps, not be willing to render Monsieur the Prince the commission with which I would charge you, and that is, that his messenger has been very agreeable to me; but I will tell him so myself."

Raoul bowed his thanks to Monsieur for the honor he had done him.

Monsieur made a sign to Madame, who struck a bell which was placed at her right hand; M. de Saint-Remy entered, and the room was soon filled with people.

"Messieurs," said the prince, "his Majesty is about to pay me the honor of passing a day at Blois; I depend upon the king, my nephew, not having to repent of the favor he does my house."

"Vive le Roi!" cried all the officers of the household, with frantic enthusiasm, and M. de Saint-Remy louder than the rest.

Gaston hung down his head with evident chagrin. He had all his life been obliged to hear, or rather to undergo, this cry of "Vive le Roi!" which passed over him. For a long time, being unaccustomed to hear it, his ear had had rest; and now a younger, more vivacious, and more brilliant royalty rose up before him, like a new and a more painful annoyance.

Madame perfectly understood the sufferings of that timid, gloomy heart. She rose from the table; Monsieur imitated her mechanically; and all the domestics, with a buzzing like that of several beehives, surrounded Raoul for the purpose of questioning him.

Madame saw this movement, and called M. de Saint-Remy. "This is not the time for gossiping, but for working," said she, with the tone of an angry housekeeper.

M. de Saint-Remy hastened to break the circle formed by the officers round Raoul, so that the latter was able to gain the antechamber.

"Care will be taken of that gentleman, I hope," added Madame, addressing M. de Saint-Remy.

The worthy man immediately hastened after Raoul. "Madame desires refreshment to be offered to you," said he; "and there is, besides, a lodging for you in the castle."

"Thanks, M. de Saint-Remy," replied Raoul; "but you know how anxious I must be to pay my duty to Monsieur the Count, my father."

"That is true, that is true, M. Raoul; present him, at the same time, my humble respects, if you please."

Raoul thus once more got rid of the old gentleman, and pursued his way. As he was passing under the porch, leading his horse by the bridle, a soft voice called him from the depths of an obscure path.

"M. Raoul!" said the voice.

The young man turned round surprised, and saw a dark-complexioned girl, who with a finger on her lip held out her other hand to him. This girl was perfectly unknown to him.

CHAPTER III.

THE INTERVIEW.

Raoul made one step towards the girl who thus called him.

"But my horse, Madame?" said he.

"Oh! you are terribly embarrassed! Go out that way, — there is a shed in the outer court; fasten your horse, and return quickly."

"I obey, Madame."

Raoul was not four minutes in performing what he had been directed to do; he returned to the little door, where, in darkness, he found his mysterious conductress waiting for him on the first steps of a winding staircase.

"Are you brave enough to follow me, Monsieur knight-errant?" asked the girl, laughing at the momentary hesitation Raoul had manifested.

The latter replied by springing up the dark staircase after her. They thus climbed up three stories, he behind her, touching with his hands, when he felt for the baluster, a silk dress which rubbed against each side of the staircase. At every false step made by Raoul, his conductress cried, "Hush!" and held out to him a soft and perfumed hand.

"One would mount thus to the donjon of the castle without being conscious of fatigue," said Raoul.

"All which means, Monsieur, that you are very much perplexed, very tired, and very uneasy. But be of good cheer, Monsieur; here we are."

The girl threw open a door, which immediately, without any transition, filled with a flood of light the landing of the staircase, at the top of which Raoul appeared, holding fast by the balustrade.

The girl walked on; he followed her. She entered a chamber; he did the same.

As soon as he was fairly in the net he heard a loud cry, and turning round saw at two paces from him, with her hands clasped and her eyes closed, that beautiful fair girl with blue eyes and white shoulders, who recognizing him had called him Raoul.

He saw her, and divined at once so much love and so much joy in the expression of her countenance, that he sank on his knees in the middle of the chamber, murmuring, on his part, the name of Louise.

"Ah! Montalais! Montalais!" sighed she, "it is very wicked to deceive one so."

"Who? I? I have deceived you?"

"Yes; you told me you would go down to inquire the news, and you have brought up Monsieur."

"Well, I was obliged to do so; how else could he have received the letter you wrote him?"

And she pointed with her finger to the letter which was still upon the table. Raoul made a step to take it. Louise, more rapid, although she had sprung forward with a very noticeable, graceful hesitation, reached out her hand to stop him. Raoul came in contact with that warm and trembling hand, took it within his own, and carried it so respectfully to his lips that he might be said to have deposited a sigh upon it rather than a kiss.

In the mean time Mademoiselle de Montalais had taken the letter, folded it carefully, as women do, in three folds, and slipped it into her bosom.

"Don't be afraid, Louise," said she; "Monsieur will

no more venture to take it hence than the defunct king Louis XIII. ventured to take billets from the corsage of Mademoiselle de Hautefort."

Raoul blushed at seeing the smile of the two girls; and he did not remark that the hand of Louise remained in his.

"There!" said Montalais, "you have pardoned me, Louise, for having brought Monsieur to you; and you, Monsieur, bear me no malice for having followed me to see Mademoiselle. Now then, peace being made, let us chat like old friends. Present me, Louise, to M. de Bragelonne."

"Monsieur the Viscount," said Louise, with her quiet grace and ingenuous smile, "I have the honor to present to you Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais, maid of honor to her royal Highness Madame, and moreover my friend, — my excellent friend."

Raoul bowed ceremoniously.

"And me, Louise," said he, — "will you not present me also to Mademoiselle?"

"Oh, she knows you; she knows all!"

This unguarded expression made Montalais laugh and Raoul sigh with happiness, for he interpreted it thus: "She knows all our love."

"The ceremonies being over, Monsieur the Viscount," said Montalais, "take a chair, and tell us quickly the news you bring flying thus."

"Mademoiselle, it is no longer a secret; the king, on his way to Poitiers, will stop at Blois, to visit his royal Highness."

"The king here!" exclaimed Montalais, clapping her hands. "What! are we going to see the court? Only think, Louise, — the real court from Paris! Oh, good heavens! But when will this happen, Monsieur?"

"Perhaps this evening, Mademoiselle; at latest, to-morrow."

Montalais lifted her shoulders in sign of vexation.

"No time to get ready! No time to prepare a single dress! We are as far behind the fashions as the Poles. We shall look like portraits of the times of Henry IV. Ah, Monsieur, this is sad news you bring us!"

"But, Mesdemoiselles, you will be still beautiful."

"That's stale! Yes, we shall be always beautiful, because Nature has made us passable; but we shall be ridiculous, because the fashion will have forgotten us. Alas! ridiculous! They will think me ridiculous, — me!"

"Who are *they?*" said Louise, innocently.

"'Who are *they*'? You are a strange girl, my dear. Is that a question to put to me? *They* means everybody; *they* means the courtiers, the nobles; *they* means the king."

"Pardon me, my good friend; but as here every one is accustomed to see us as we are — "

"Granted; but that is about to change, and we shall be ridiculous, even for Blois; for close to us will be seen the fashions from Paris, and they will perceive that we are in the fashion of Blois! It is enough to make one wild!"

"Console yourself, Mademoiselle."

"Well, so let it be! After all, so much the worse for those who do not find me to their taste!" said Montalais, philosophically.

"They would be very difficult to please," replied Raoul, faithful to his regular system of gallantry.

"Thank you, Monsieur the Viscount. We were saying, then, that the king is coming to Blois?"

"With all the court."

"Mesdemoiselles de Mancini, will they be with them?"

"No, certainly not."

"But as the king, it is said, cannot do without Mademoiselle Marie?"

"Mademoiselle, the king must do without her. Monsieur the Cardinal will have it so. He has exiled his nieces to Brouage."

"He! — the hypocrite!"

"Hush!" said Louise, pressing a finger on her friend's rosy lips.

"Bah! nobody can hear me. I say that old Mazarino Mazarini is a hypocrite, who burns impatiently to make his niece queen of France."

"That cannot be, Mademoiselle, since Monsieur the Cardinal, on the contrary, has brought about the marriage of his Majesty with the Infanta Maria Theresa."

Montalais looked Raoul full in the face, and said: "And do you Parisians believe in these tales? Well! here in Blois we are a little more cunning than you."

"Mademoiselle, if the king goes beyond Poitiers and sets out for Spain; if the articles of the marriage contract are agreed upon by Don Luis de Haro and his Eminence, — you must plainly perceive that it is no longer child's play."

"All very fine! but the king is king, I suppose?"

"No doubt, Mademoiselle; but the cardinal is the cardinal."

"The king is not a man, then! And he does not love Marie Mancini?"

"He adores her."

"Well, he will marry her then. We shall have war with Spain. M. Mazarin will spend a few of the millions he has put away; our gentlemen will perform prodigies of valor in their encounters with the proud Castilians,

and many of them will return crowned with laurels, to be recrowned by us with myrtles. Now, that is my view of politics."

"Montalais, you are wild!" said Louise, "and every exaggeration attracts you as light does a moth."

"Louise, you are so extremely reasonable that you will never know how to love."

"Oh!" said Louise, in a tone of tender reproach, "don't you see, Montalais? The queen-mother desires to marry her son to the infanta; would you wish the king to disobey his mother? Is it for a royal heart like his to give a bad example? When parents forbid love, love must be banished."

And Louise sighed. Raoul cast down his eyes, with an expression of constraint. Montalais, on her part, laughed aloud.

"Well, I have no parents!" said she.

"You are acquainted, without doubt, with the state of health of M. le Comte de la Fère?" said Louise, after breathing that sigh which had revealed so many griefs in its eloquent utterance.

"No, Mademoiselle," replied Raoul, "I have not yet paid my respects to my father; I was going to his house when Mademoiselle de Montalais so kindly stopped me. I hope the count is well. You have heard nothing to the contrary, have you?"

"No, M. Raoul, — nothing, thank God!"

Here, for several instants, ensued a silence, during which two spirits which followed the same idea communicated perfectly, without even the assistance of a single glance.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Montalais, in a fright; "there is somebody coming up."

"Who can it be?" said Louise, rising in great agitation.

"Mesdemoiselles, I inconvenience you very much. I have, without doubt, been very indiscreet," stammered Raoul, very ill at ease.

"It is a heavy step," said Louise.

"Ah! if it is only M. Malicorne," added Montalais, "do not disturb yourselves."

Louise and Raoul looked at each other to inquire who M. Malicorne could be.

"There is no occasion to mind him," continued Montalais; "he is not jealous."

"But, Mademoiselle —" said Raoul.

"Yes, I understand. Well, he is as discreet as I am."

"Good heavens!" cried Louise, who had applied her ear to the door, which had been left ajar; "it is my mother's step!"

"Madame de Saint-Remy! Where shall I hide myself?" exclaimed Raoul, catching at the dress of Montalais, who looked quite bewildered.

"Yes," said she; "yes, I know the clicking of those pattens! It is our excellent mother. Monsieur the Viscount, what a pity it is the window looks upon a stone pavement, and that fifty feet below it!"

Raoul glanced at the balcony in despair. Louise seized his arm, and held it tight.

"Oh, how silly I am!" said Montalais; "have I not the robe-of-ceremony closet? It looks as if it were made on purpose."

It was quite time to act; Madame de Saint-Remy was coming up at a quicker pace than usual. She gained the landing at the moment when Montalais, as in all scenes of surprises, shut the closet by leaning with her back against the door.

"Ah!" cried Madame de Saint-Remy, "you are here, are you, Louise?"

"Yes, Madame," replied she, more pale than if she had committed a great crime.

"Well, well!"

"Pray be seated, Madame," said Montalais, offering her a chair, which she placed so that the back was towards the closet.

"Thank you, Mademoiselle Aure, — thank you. Come, my child, be quick!"

"Where do you wish me to go, Madame?"

"Why, home, to be sure; have you not to prepare your toilette?"

"What did you say?" cried Montalais, hastening to affect surprise, so fearful was she that Louise would in some way commit herself.

"You don't know the news, then?" said Madame de Saint-Remy.

"What news, Madame, is it possible for two girls to learn up in this dove-cot?"

"What! have you seen nobody?"

"Madame, you talk in enigmas, and you torment us at a slow fire!" cried Montalais, who, terrified at seeing Louise become paler and paler, did not know to what saint to put up her vows.

At length she caught an eloquent look of her companion's, one of those looks which would convey intelligence to a brick wall. Louise directed her attention to a hat, — Raoul's unlucky hat, which was set out in all its feathery splendor upon the table.

Montalais sprang towards it, and, seizing it with her left hand, passed it behind her into the right, concealing it as she was speaking.

"Well," said Madame de Saint-Remy, "a courier has arrived announcing the approach of the king. There, Mesdemoiselles; there is something to make you put on your best looks."

"Quick, quick!" cried Montalais. "Follow Madame your mother, Louise; and leave me to get ready my dress of ceremony."

Louise arose; her mother took her by the hand and led her out on to the landing.

"Come along," said she, then adding in a lower voice, "When I forbid you to come to the apartment of Montalais, why do you do so?"

"Madame, she is my friend. Besides, I was but just come."

"Did you see nobody concealed while you were there?"

"Madame!"

"I saw a man's hat, I tell you, — the hat of that fellow, that good-for-nothing!"

"Madame!" repeated Louise.

"Of that do-nothing De Malicorne! A maid of honor to have such company, — fie! fie!" And their voices were lost in the depths of the narrow staircase.

Montalais had not missed a word of this conversation, which echo conveyed to her as if through a tunnel. She shrugged her shoulders on seeing Raoul, who had listened likewise, issue from the closet.

"Poor Montalais," said she, "the victim of friendship! Poor Malicorne, the victim of love!"

She stopped on viewing the tragi-comic face of Raoul, who was vexed at having, in one day, surprised so many secrets.

"Oh, Mademoiselle!" said he, "how can we repay your kindnesses?"

"Oh, we will balance accounts some day," said she. "For the present, begone, M. de Bragelonne, for Madame de Saint-Remy is not over indulgent; and any indiscretion on her part might bring hither a domiciliary visit, which would be disagreeable to all parties. Adieu!"

"But Louise — how shall I know — "

"Begone! begone! King Louis XI. knew very well what he was about when he invented the post."

"Alas!" sighed Raoul.

"And am I not here, — I, who am worth all the posts in the kingdom? Quick, I say, to horse! so that if Madame de Saint-Remy should return for the purpose of preaching me a lesson on morality, she may not find you here."

"She would tell my father, would she not?" murmured Raoul.

"And you would be scolded. Ah, Viscount, it is very plain you come from court; you are as timid as the king. *Peste!* at Blois we contrive better than that, to do without Papa's consent. Ask Malicorne else!"

And at these words the gay girl pushed Raoul out of the room by the shoulders. He glided swiftly down to the porch, regained his horse, mounted, and set off as if he had had Monsieur's eight guards at his heels.

CHAPTER IV.

FATHER AND SON.

Raoul followed the well-known road, so dear to his memory, which led from Blois to the residence of the Comte de la Fère.

The reader will dispense with a second description of that habitation; he, perhaps, has been with us there before and knows it. Only, since our last journey thither, the walls had taken a grayer tint, and the brick-work assumed a more harmonious copper tone; the trees had grown, and many that then only stretched their slender branches along the tops of the hedges, now, bushy, strong, and luxuriant, cast around, beneath boughs swollen with sap, a thick shade of flowers or fruit for the benefit of the traveller.

Raoul perceived, from a distance, the sharp roof, the two little turrets, the dove-cot in the elms, and the flights of pigeons, who wheeled incessantly around that brick cone, seemingly without power to quit it, like the sweet memories that hover round a spirit at peace.

As he approached, he heard the noise of the pulleys which grated under the weight of the huge water-buckets. He also fancied he heard the melancholy moaning of the water which falls back again into the wells, — a sad, funereal, solemn sound, that strikes the ear of the child and the poet, — both dreamers, — which the English call "splash;" Arabian poets, "gasgachau;" and which we Frenchmen, who would be poets, can only

translate by a paraphrase, "the noise of water falling into water."

It was more than a year since Raoul had been to visit his father. He had passed the whole time in the household of Monsieur the Prince. In fact, after all the commotions of the Fronde, of the early period of which we formerly attempted to give a sketch, Louis de Condé had made a public, solemn, and frank reconciliation with the court. During all the time that the rupture between the king and the prince had lasted, the prince, who had long entertained a great regard for Bragelonne, had in vain offered him advantages of the most dazzling kind for a young man. The Comte de la Fère, still faithful to his principles of loyalty and royalty one day developed before his son in the vaults of St. Denis, — the Comte de la Fère, in the name of his son, had always declined them. Moreover, instead of following M. de Condé in his rebellion, the viscount had followed M. de Turenne, fighting for the king. Then, when M. de Turenne, in his turn, had appeared to abandon the royal cause, he had quitted M. de Turenne, as he had quitted M. de Condé. It resulted from this invariable line of conduct, that, as Condé and Turenne had never been conquerors of each other except under the standard of the king, Raoul, although so young, had ten victories inscribed on his list of services, and not one defeat from which his bravery or conscience had to suffer.

Raoul, therefore, had, in compliance with the wish of his father, served obstinately and passively the fortunes of Louis XIV., in spite of the tergiversations which were endemic, and, it might be said, inevitable, at that period.

M. de Condé, on being restored to favor, had at once availed himself of all the privileges of the amnesty, to

ask for many things back again which had been granted him before, and, among others, Raoul. M. de la Fère, with his invariable good sense, had immediately sent him again to the prince.

A year, then, had passed away since the separation of the father and son. A few letters had softened, but not removed, the pains of absence. We have seen that Raoul had left at Blois another love in addition to filial love. But let us do him this justice, — if it had not been for chance and Mademoiselle de Montalais, two tempting demons, Raoul, after delivering his message, would have galloped off towards his father's house, turning his head round, perhaps, but without stopping for a single instant, even if he had seen Louise holding out her arms to him.

So the first part of the distance was given by Raoul to regretting the past which he had been forced to quit so quickly, — that is to say, to his lady-love ; and the other part to the friend towards whom he was travelling so much too slowly for his wishes.

Raoul found the garden-gate open, and rode straight in, without regarding the long arms, raised in anger, of an old man dressed in a jacket of violet-colored wool, and a large cap of old faded velvet.

The old man, who was weeding with his hands a bed of dwarf roses and marguerites, was indignant at seeing a horse thus traversing his sanded and nicely raked walks. He even ventured a vigorous "Humph!" which made the cavalier turn round. Then there was a change of scene ; for no sooner had he caught sight of Raoul's face, than the old man sprang up and set off in the direction of the house, amid intermittent growlings, which he meant to be paroxysms of wild delight.

When arrived at the stables, Raoul gave his horse to a



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little lackey, and sprang up the perron with an ardor that would have delighted the heart of his father.

He crossed the antechamber, the dining-room, and the salon without meeting with any one; at length, on reaching the door of M. le Comte de la Fère's apartment, he rapped impatiently, and entered almost without waiting for the word "Enter!" which was thrown to him by a voice at once sweet and serious. The count was seated at a table covered with papers and books; he was still the noble, handsome gentleman of former days, but time had given to this nobleness and beauty a more solemn and distinct character. A brow white and void of wrinkles, beneath his long hair, now more white than black · an eye piercing and mild, under the lids of a young man; his moustache, fine and but slightly grizzled, waved over lips which were of a pure and delicate model, as if they had never been curled by mortal passions; a shape straight and supple; an irreproachable but thin hand; — such was still the illustrious gentleman whom so many illustrious mouths had praised under the name of Athos. He was engaged in correcting the pages of a manuscript book, entirely filled by his own hand.

Raoul seized his father by the shoulders, by the neck, as he could, and embraced him so tenderly and so rapidly that the count had neither strength nor time to disengage himself, or to overcome his paternal emotions.

"What! you here, Raoul — you! Is it possible?" said he.

"Oh, Monsieur, Monsieur, what joy to see you once again!"

"But you don't answer me, Viscount. Have you leave of absence, or has some misfortune happened at Paris?"

"Thank God, Monsieur," replied Raoul, calming himself by degrees, "nothing has happened but what is fortu-

nate. The king is going to be married, as I had the honor of informing you in my last letter, and, on his way to Spain, he will pass through Blois."

"To pay a visit to Monsieur?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Count. So, fearing to find him unprepared, or wishing to be particularly polite to him, Monsieur the Prince sent me forward to have the lodgings ready."

"You have seen Monsieur!" asked the viscount, eagerly.

"I have had that honor."

"At the castle?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied Raoul, casting down his eyes, because, no doubt, he had felt there was something more than curiosity in the count's inquiries.

"Ah, indeed, Viscount! Accept my compliments."

Raoul bowed.

"But you have seen some one else at Blois?"

"Monsieur, I saw her royal Highness Madame."

"That's very well; but it is not Madame that I mean."

Raoul colored deeply, but made no reply.

"You do not appear to understand me, Monsieur the Viscount," persisted M. de la Fère, without accenting his words more strongly, but with a rather severer look.

"I understand you quite plainly, Monsieur," replied Raoul; "and if I hesitate a little in my reply, you are well assured I am not seeking for a falsehood."

"I know you cannot lie, and am therefore surprised that you should be so long in saying yes or no."

"I cannot answer you without understanding you well; and if I have understood you, you will take my first words in ill part. You will be displeased, no doubt, Monsieur the Count, because I have seen —"

"Mademoiselle de la Vallière — have you not?"

"It was of her you meant to speak, I know very well, Monsieur," said Raoul, with inexpressible sweetness.

"And I ask you if you have seen her."

"Monsieur, I was ignorant, when I entered the castle, that Mademoiselle de la Vallière was there; it was only on my return, after I had performed my mission, that chance brought us together. I have had the honor of paying my respects to her."

"But what do you call the chance that led you into the presence of Mademoiselle de la Vallière?"

"Mademoiselle de Montalais, Monsieur."

"And who is Mademoiselle de Montalais?"

"A young lady I did not know before, whom I had never seen. She is maid of honor to Madame."

"Monsieur the Viscount, I will push my interrogatory no further, and reproach myself with having carried it so far. I had desired you to avoid Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and not to see her without my permission. Oh! I am quite sure you have told me the truth, and that you took no measures to approach her. Chance has done me this injury; I do not accuse you of it. I will be content, then, with what I formerly said to you concerning this young lady. I do not reproach her with anything, — God is my witness; only it is not my intention or wish that you should frequent her place of residence. I beg you once more, my dear Raoul, to understand that."

It was plain the limpid, pure eye of Raoul was troubled at this speech.

"Now, my friend," said the count, with his soft smile and in his customary tone, "let us talk of other matters. You are returning, perhaps, to your duty?"

"No, Monsieur, I have no duty for to-day, except the pleasure of remaining with you. The prince kindly ap-

pointed me no other duty than that, which was so much in accord with my wish."

"Is the king well?"

"Perfectly."

"And Monsieur the Prince also?"

"As usual, Monsieur."

The count forgot to inquire after Mazarin; that was an old habit.

"Well, Raoul, since you are entirely mine, I will give up my whole day to you. Embrace me — again, again! You are at home, Viscount! Ah! there is our old Grimaud! Come in, Grimaud; Monsieur the Viscount is desirous of embracing you likewise."

The good old man did not require to be twice told; he rushed in with open arms, Raoul meeting him half-way.

"Now, if you please, we will go into the garden, Raoul. I will show you the new lodging I have had prepared for you during your leave of absence; and, while examining the last winter's plantations, and two saddle-horses I have just procured by exchange, you will give me all the news of our friends in Paris."

The count closed his manuscript, took the young man's arm, and went out into the garden with him.

Grimaud looked at Raoul with a melancholy air as the young man passed out; observing that his head nearly touched the traverse of the doorway, stroking his white *royale*, he allowed the single word "GROWN!" to escape him.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH SOMETHING WILL BE SAID OF CROPOLI, OR CROPOLE, AND OF A GREAT UNKNOWN PAINTER.

While the Comte de la Fère with Raoul visits the new buildings he has had erected, and the new horses he has bought, with the reader's permission we will lead him back to the city of Blois, and make him a witness of the unaccustomed activity which pervades that city.

It was in the hotels that the surprise of the news brought by Raoul was most sensibly felt.

In fact, the king and the court at Blois, — that is to say, a hundred horsemen, ten carriages, two hundred horses, as many lackeys as masters, — where was this crowd to be housed? Where were to be lodged all the gentry of the neighborhood, who would flock in in two or three hours after the news had enlarged the circle of its report, like the increasing circumferences produced by a stone thrown into a placid lake?

Blois, as peaceful in the morning, as we have seen, as the calmest lake in the world, at the announcement of the royal arrival, was suddenly filled with buzzing and tumult.

All the servants of the castle, under the inspection of the officers, were sent into the city in quest of provisions; and ten horsemen were despatched to the preserves of Chambord to seek for game, to the fisheries of Beuvron for fish, and to the gardens of Chaverny for fruits and flowers.

Precious tapestries, and lustres with great gilt chains were drawn from the wardrobes; an army of the poor were engaged in sweeping the courts and washing the stone fronts, while their wives went in droves to the meadows beyond the Loire, to gather green boughs and field-flowers. The whole city, not to be behind in this luxury of cleanliness, assumed its best toilette, with the help of brushes, brooms, and water.

The kennels of the upper city, swollen by these continued outpourings, became rivers at the lower part of the city; and the pavement — generally very muddy, it must be allowed — took a clean face, and absolutely shone in the friendly rays of the sun.

Next the music was to be provided; drawers were emptied; the shopkeepers had a glorious trade in wax, ribbons, and sword-knots; housekeepers laid in stores of bread, meat, and spices. And now numbers of the citizens, whose houses were furnished as if for a siege, having nothing more to do, donned their festive clothes, and directed their course towards the city gate, in order to be the first to signal or see the *cortége*. They knew very well that the king would not arrive before night, perhaps not before the next morning. But what is expectation but a kind of folly, and what is that folly but an excess of hope?

In the lower city, at scarcely a hundred paces from the Castle of the States, between the mall and the castle, in a sufficiently handsome street, then called Rue Vieille, and which must, in fact, have been very old, stood a venerable edifice, with pointed gables, of squat and large dimensions, ornamented with three windows looking into the street on the first floor, with two in the second, and with a little bull's-eye in the third.

On the sides of this triangle had recently been constructed

a parallelogram of considerable size, which encroached upon the street remorselessly, according to the familiar custom of the building-inspectors of that period. The street was narrowed by a quarter by it, but then the house was enlarged by a half; and was not that a sufficient compensation?

Tradition said that this house with the pointed gables was inhabited, in the time of Henry III., by a councillor of State whom Queen Catherine came, some say to visit, and others to strangle. However that may be, the good lady must have stepped with a circumspect foot over the threshold of this building.

After the councillor had died — whether by strangulation or naturally is of no consequence — the house had been sold, then abandoned, and lastly isolated from the other houses of the street. Towards the middle of the reign of Louis XIII. only, an Italian, named Cropoli, escaped from the kitchens of Maréchal d'Ancre, came and took possession of this house. There he established a little hostelry, in which was fabricated a macaroni so delicious that people came from miles round to fetch it or eat it.

So famous had the house become for it, that, when Marie de Médicis was a prisoner, as we know, in the castle of Blois, she once sent for some.

It was precisely on the day she had escaped by the famous window. The dish of macaroni was left upon the table, only just tasted by the royal mouth.

This double prestige of a strangulation and a macaroni, conferred upon the triangular house, gave poor Cropoli a fancy to grace his hostelry with a pompous title. But his quality of an Italian was no recommendation in these times, and his small, well-concealed fortune forbade attracting too much attention.

When he found himself about to die, which happened in 1643, just after the death of Louis XIII., he called to him his son, a young cook of great promise, and with tears in his eyes, recommended him to preserve carefully the secret of the macaroni, to Frenchify his name, and at length, when the political horizon should be cleared from the clouds which obscured it, — this was practised then as in our day, — to order of the nearest smith a handsome sign, upon which a famous painter, whom he named, should design two queens' portraits, with these words as a legend: "To THE MEDICI."

The worthy Cropoli, after these recommendations, had only sufficient time to point out to his young successor a fireplace, under the slab of which he had hidden a thousand ten-franc louis, and then expired.

Cropoli the younger, like a man of good heart, supported the loss with resignation, and the gain without insolence. He began by accustoming the public to sound the final *i* of his name so little, that, by the aid of general complaisance, he was soon called nothing but M. Cropole, which is quite a French name. He then married, having had in his eye a little French girl, from whose parents he extorted a reasonable dowry by showing them what there was beneath the slab of the fireplace.

These two points accomplished, he went in search of the painter who was to paint the sign; and he was soon found. He was an old Italian, a rival of the Raphaels and the Caracci, but an unfortunate rival. He said he was of the Venetian school, doubtless from his fondness for color. His works, of which he had never sold one, attracted the eye at a distance of a hundred paces; but they so formidably displeased the citizens that he had finished by painting no more.

He boasted of having painted a bath-room for Madame la Maréchale d'Ancre, and moaned over this chamber having been burnt at the time of the marshal's disaster.

Cropoli, in his character of a compatriot, was indulgent towards Pittrino, which was the name of the artist. Perhaps he had seen the famous pictures of the bath-room Be this as it may, he held in such esteem, we may say in such friendship, the famous Pittrino, that he took him into his own house.

Pittrino, grateful, and fed with macaroni, set about propagating the reputation of this national dish; and from the time of its founder, he had rendered, with his indefatigable tongue, signal services to the house of Cropoli.

As he grew old he attached himself to the son as he had done to the father, and by degrees became a kind of overlooker of the house, in which his remarkable integrity, his acknowledged sobriety, his proverbial chastity, and a thousand other virtues useless to enumerate, gave him an eternal place by the fireside, with a right of inspection over the domestics. Besides this, it was he who tasted the macaroni, to maintain the pure flavor of the ancient tradition; and it must be allowed that he never permitted a grain of pepper too much, or an atom of parmesan too little. His joy was at its height on that day when called upon to share the secret of Cropoli the younger, and to paint the famous sign.

He was seen at once rummaging with ardor in an old box, in which he found some pencils, a little gnawed by the rats, but still passable; some colors in bladders, almost dried up; some linseed-oil in a bottle, and a palette which had formerly belonged to Bronzino, that *diou de la pittoure*, as the ultramontane artist, in his ever-young enthusiasm, always called him.

Pittrino was puffed up with all the joy of a rehabilitation.

He did as Raphael had done, — he changed his style, and painted, in the fashion of the Albanian, two goddesses rather than two queens. These illustrious ladies appeared so lovely on the sign, — they presented to the astonished eyes such an assemblage of lilies and roses, the enchanting result of the change of style in Pittrino, — they assumed *poses* of sirens so Anacreontic, — that the chief magistrate, when admitted to view this capital piece in the hall of Cropoli, at once declared that these ladies were too handsome, of too animated a beauty, to figure as a sign in the eyes of passengers.

To Pittrino he added: "His royal Highness Monsieur, who often comes into our city, will not be much pleased to see his illustrious mother so slightly clothed, and he will send you to the dungeons of the State; for, remember, the heart of that glorious prince is not always tender. You must efface either the two sirens or the legend, without which I forbid the exhibition of the sign. I say this for your sake, Master Cropole, as well as for yours, Signor Pittrino."

What answer could be made to this? It was necessary to thank the magistrate for his kindness, which Cropole did. But Pittrino remained downcast and sad; he felt assured of what was about to happen.

The edile was scarcely gone when Cropole, crossing his arms, said, "Well, master, what is to be done?"

"We must efface the legend," said Pittrino, in a melancholy tone. "I have some excellent ivory-black; it will be done in a moment, and we will replace the Medici by the nymphs or the sirens, whichever you prefer."

"No," said Cropole, "the will of my father must be carried out. My father considered —"

"He considered the figures of the most importance," said Pittrino.

"He thought most of the legend," said Cropole.

"The proof of the importance in which he held the figures," said Pittrino, "is that he desired they should be likenesses, and they are so."

"Yes; but if they had not been so, who would have recognized them without the legend? At the present day, even, when the memory of the Blaisois begins to be faint with regard to these two celebrated persons, who would recognize Catherine and Marie without the words 'To the Medici'?"

"But the figures?" said Pittrino, in despair; for he felt that young Cropole was right. "I should not like to lose the fruit of my labor."

"And I should not wish you to be thrown into prison, and myself into the dungeons."

"Let us efface 'Medici,'" said Pittrino, supplicatingly.

"No," replied Cropole, firmly. "I have got an idea, a sublime idea, — your picture shall appear, and my legend likewise. Does not 'Medici' mean 'doctor,' or 'physician,' in Italian?"

"Yes, in the plural."

"Well, then, you shall order another sign-frame of the smith; you shall paint six physicians, and write underneath 'Aux Medici,' which makes a very pretty play upon words."

"Six physicians! impossible! And the composition?" cried Pittrino.

"That is your business — but so it shall be — I insist upon it — it must be so — my macaroni is burning."

This reasoning was peremptory. Pittrino obeyed. He composed the sign of six physicians, with the legend; the magistrate applauded and authorized it.

The sign produced an extravagant success in the city, which proves that poetry has always suffered injustice from the people, as Pittrino said.

Cropole, to make amends to his painter-in-ordinary, hung up the nymphs of the preceding sign in his bedroom, which made Madame Cropole blush every time she looked at it, when she was undressing at night.

This is the way in which the pointed-gable house got a sign; and this is how the hostelry of the Medici, making a fortune, was forced to be enlarged by the quadrilateral which we have described; and this is how there was at Blois a hostelry of that name, which had Master Cropole for proprietor, and for painter-in-ordinary Master Pittrino.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNKNOWN.

Thus founded and recommended by its sign, the hostelry of Master Cropole held its way steadily on towards a solid prosperity.

It was not an immense fortune that Cropole had in view; but he might hope to double the thousand louis d'or left by his father, to make another thousand louis by the sale of his house and stock, and, free at length, to live happily like a retired citizen.

Cropole was anxious for gain, and was half crazy with joy at the news of the arrival of Louis XIV.

Himself, his wife, Pittrino, and two cooks immediately laid hands upon all the inhabitants of the dove-cot, the poultry-yard, and the rabbit-hutches; so that as many lamentations and cries resounded in the yards of the hostelry of the Medici as were once heard in Rama.

Cropole had, at the time, but one single traveller in his house.

This was a man of scarcely thirty years of age, handsome, tall, austere, or rather melancholy, in all his gestures and looks.

He was dressed in black velvet with jet trimmings; a white collar, as plain as that of the severest Puritan, set off the whiteness of his youthful neck; a small, dark-colored mustache scarcely covered his curled, disdainful lip.

He spoke to people looking them full in the face, without affectation, it is true, but without scruple; so that the brilliancy of his black eyes became so insupportable that more than one look had sunk beneath his, like the weaker sword in a single combat.

At this time, in which men, all created equal by God, were divided, thanks to prejudices, into two distinct castes, the gentleman and the commoner, as they are really divided into two races, the black and the white, — at this time, we say, he whose portrait we have just sketched could not fail of being taken for a gentleman, and of the best class. To ascertain this, there was no necessity to consult anything but his hands, long, slender, and white, of which every muscle, every vein, became apparent through the skin at the least movement, and the phalanges reddened at the least irritation.

This gentleman, then, had arrived alone at Cropole's house. He had taken, without hesitation, without reflection even, the principal appartement, which the host had pointed out to him with a rapacious aim, very reprehensible some will say, very praiseworthy will say others, if they admit that Cropole was a physiognomist, and judged people at first sight.

This appartement was that which composed the whole front of the ancient triangular house, — a large salon, lighted by two windows on the first stage, a small chamber by the side of it, and another above it.

Now, from the time he had arrived this gentleman had scarcely touched any repast that had been served up to him in his chamber. He had spoken but two words to the host, to warn him that a traveller of the name of Parry would arrive, and to desire that, when he did, he should be shown up to him immediately.

He afterwards preserved so profound a silence, that

Cropole was almost offended, so much did he prefer people who were good company.

This gentleman had risen early the morning of the day on which this history begins, and had placed himself at the window of his salon, seated upon the ledge, and leaning upon the rail of the balcony, gazing sadly but persistently on both sides of the street, watching, no doubt, for the arrival of the traveller he had mentioned to the host.

In this way he had seen the little *cortége* of Monsieur return from hunting, then had again partaken of the profound tranquillity of the street, absorbed in his own expectation.

All at once the movement of the poor going to the meadows, couriers setting out, washers of pavement, purveyors of the royal household, gabbling, scampering shopboys, chariots in motion, hairdressers on the run, and pages toiling along, — this tumult and bustle had surprised him, but without his losing any of that impassible and supreme majesty which gives to the eagle and the lion that serene and contemptuous glance amidst the hurrahs and shouts of hunters or the curious.

Soon the cries of the victims slaughtered in the poultry-yard; the hasty steps of Madame Cropole up that little wooden staircase, so narrow and so sonorous; the bounding pace of Pittrino, who only that morning was smoking at the door with all the phlegm of a Dutchman; — all this communicated something like agitation and surprise to the traveller.

As he was rising to make inquiries, the door of his chamber opened. The unknown concluded they were about to introduce the impatiently expected traveller; with some precipitation, therefore, he took three steps towards the opening door.

But, instead of the person he expected, it was Master Cropole who appeared, and behind him, in the half-dark staircase, the pleasant face of Madame Cropole, rendered trivial by curiosity. She only gave one furtive glance at the handsome gentleman, and disappeared.

Cropole advanced, cap in hand, rather bent than bowing.

A gesture of the unknown interrogated him, without a word being pronounced.

"Monsieur," said Cropole, "I come to ask how — what ought I to say: your Lordship, Monsieur the Count, or Monsieur the Marquis?"

"Say *Monsieur*, and speak quickly," replied the unknown, with that haughty accent which admits of neither discussion nor reply.

"I came, then, to inquire how Monsieur had passed the night, and if Monsieur intended to keep this appartement?"

"Yes."

"Monsieur, something has happened upon which we could not reckon."

"What?"

"His Majesty Louis XIV. will enter our city to-day, and will remain here one day, perhaps two."

Great astonishment was pictured on the countenance of the unknown.

"The King of France coming to Blois?"

"He is on the road, Monsieur."

"Then there is the stronger reason for my remaining," said the unknown.

"Very well; but will Monsieur keep the entire appartement?"

"I do not understand you. Why should I require less to-day than yesterday?"

"Because, Monsieur, your Lordship will permit me to

say, yesterday I did not think proper, when you chose your lodging, to fix any price that might have made your Lordship believe that I prejudged your resources, while to-day —"

The unknown colored; the idea at once struck him that he was supposed to be poor, and that he was insulted.

"While to-day," replied he, coldly, "you do prejudge?"

"Monsieur, I am a well-meaning man, thank God! and, simple hotel-keeper as I am, there is in me the blood of a gentleman. My father was a servant and officer of the late Maréchal d'Ancre. God rest his soul!"

"I do not contest that point with you; I only wish to know, and that quickly, to what your questions tend?"

"You are too reasonable, Monsieur, not to comprehend that our city is small, that the court is about to invade it, that the houses will be overflowing with inhabitants, and that lodgings will consequently obtain considerable prices."

Again the unknown colored. "Name your terms," said he.

"I name them with scruple, Monsieur, because I seek an honest gain, and because I wish to carry on my business without being uncivil or extravagant in my demands. Now, the appartement you occupy is considerable, and you are alone."

"That is my business."

"Oh, certainly. I do not mean to turn Monsieur out."

The blood rushed to the temples of the unknown; he darted at poor Cropole, the descendant of one of the officers of the Maréchal d'Ancre, a glance that would have

buried him beneath that famous chimney-slab, if Cropole had not been nailed to the spot by the question of his own proper interests.

"Do you desire me to go?" said he. "Explain yourself, — but quickly."

"Monsieur, Monsieur, you do not understand me. It is very delicate, I know, — that which I am doing. I express myself badly, or, perhaps, as Monsieur is a foreigner, which I perceive by his accent — "

In fact, the unknown spoke with that slight difficulty with the letter *r*, which is the principal characteristic of English pronunciation, even among men of that nation who speak the French language with the greatest purity.

"As Monsieur is a foreigner, I say, it is perhaps he who does not catch my exact meaning. I wish for Monsieur to give up one or two of the rooms he occupies, which would diminish his expenses and ease my conscience. Indeed, it is hard to increase unreasonably the price of the chambers, when one has had the honor to let them at a reasonable price."

"How much does the hire amount to since yesterday?"

"Monsieur, to one louis, with refreshments and the charge for the horse."

"Very well; and that of to-day?"

"Ah! there is the difficulty. This is the day of the king's arrival; if the court comes to sleep here, the charge of the day is reckoned. From that it results that three chambers, at two louis each, make six louis. Two louis, Monsieur, are not much; but six louis make a great deal."

The unknown, from red, as we have seen him, became very pale.

He drew from his pocket, with heroic bravery, a purse

embroidered with a coat-of-arms, which he carefully concealed in the hollow of his hand. This purse was of a thinness, a flabbiness, a hollowness, which did not escape the eye of Cropole.

The unknown emptied the purse into his hand. It contained three double louis, which amounted to the six louis demanded by the host.

But it was seven that Cropole had required.

He looked, therefore, at the unknown, as much as to say, "And then?"

"There remains one louis, does there not, master host?"

"Yes, Monsieur, but —"

The unknown plunged his hand into the pocket of his *haut-de-chausses* and emptied it. It contained a small pocket-book, a gold key, and some silver. With this change he made up a louis.

"Thank you, Monsieur," said Cropole. "It now only remains for me to ask whether Monsieur intends to occupy his appartement to-morrow, in which case I will reserve it for him; whereas, if Monsieur does not mean to do so, I will promise it to some of the king's people who are coming."

"That is but right," said the unknown, after a long silence; "but as I have no more money, as you have seen, and as I yet must retain the appartement, you must either sell this diamond in the city, or hold it in pledge."

Cropole looked at the diamond so long that the unknown said hastily: "I prefer your selling it, Monsieur, for it is worth three hundred pistoles. A Jew — are there any Jews in Blois? — would give you two hundred or a hundred and fifty for it. Take whatever may be offered for it, if it be no more than the price of your lodging. Begone!"

"Oh, Monsieur," replied Cropole, ashamed of the sudden inferiority which the unknown retorted upon him by this noble and disinterested confidence, as well as by the unalterable patience opposed to so many suspicions and evasions, — "Oh, Monsieur, I hope people are not so dishonest at Blois as you seem to think; and that the diamond, being worth what you say — "

The unknown here again darted at Cropole one of his eloquent glances.

"I really do not understand diamonds, Monsieur, I assure you," cried he.

"But the jewellers do; ask them," said the unknown. "Now I believe our accounts are settled, are they not, Monsieur host?"

"Yes, Monsieur, and to my profound regret, for I fear I have offended Monsieur."

"Not at all," replied the unknown, with ineffable majesty.

"Or have appeared to be extortionate with a noble traveller. Consider, Monsieur, the peculiarity of the case."

"Say no more about it, I desire; and leave me to myself."

Cropole bowed profoundly, and left the room with a stupefied air, which proved that he had a good heart and felt genuine remorse.

The unknown himself shut the door after him, and, when left alone, looked mournfully at the bottom of the purse, from which he had taken a small silken bag containing the diamond, his last resource.

He dwelt likewise upon the emptiness of his pockets, turned over the papers in his pocket-book, and convinced himself of the state of absolute destitution in which he was about to be plunged.

He raised his eyes towards heaven, with a sublime emotion of despairing calmness, brushed off with his trembling hand some drops of sweat which trickled over his noble brow, and then cast down upon the earth a look which just before had been impressed with almost divine majesty.

The storm had passed far from him; perhaps he had prayed from the bottom of his soul.

He drew near to the window, resumed his place in the balcony, and remained there, motionless, annihilated, dead, till the moment when, the heavens beginning to darken, the first flambeaux traversed the perfumed street, and gave the signal for illumination to all the windows of the city.

CHAPTER VII.

PARRY.

WHILE the unknown was viewing these lights with interest, and lending an ear to the various noises, Master Cropole entered the appartement, followed by two attendants, who laid the cloth for his meal.

The stranger did not pay them the least attention; but Cropole, approaching him respectfully, whispered, "Monsieur, the diamond has been valued."

"Ah!" said the traveller. "Well?"

"Well, Monsieur, the jeweller of his royal Highness gives two hundred and eighty pistoles for it."

"Have you them?"

"I thought it best to take them, Monsieur; nevertheless, I made it a condition of the bargain, that if Monsieur wished to keep his diamond it should be held till Monsieur was again in funds."

"Oh, no, not at all! I told you to sell it."

"Then I have obeyed, or nearly so, since, without having definitely sold it, I have touched the money."

"Pay yourself," added the unknown.

"I will do so, Monsieur, since you so positively require it."

A sad smile passed over the lips of the gentleman.

"Place the money on that trunk," said he, turning round and pointing to the piece of furniture.

Cropole deposited a tolerably large bag as directed, after having taken from it the amount of his reckoning.

"Now," said he, "I hope Monsieur will not give me the pain of not taking any supper. Dinner has already been refused; this is affronting to the house of the Medici. Look, Monsieur, the supper is on the table, and I venture to say that it looks attractive."

The unknown asked for a glass of wine, broke off a morsel of bread, and did not stir from the window while he ate and drank.

Shortly after was heard a loud flourish of trumpets; cries arose in the distance, a confused buzzing filled the lower part of the city, and the first distinct sound that struck the ears of the stranger was the tramp of advancing horses.

"The king! the king!" repeated a noisy and eager crowd.

"The king!" cried Cropole, abandoning his guest and his ideas of delicacy to satisfy his curiosity.

With Cropole were mingled and jostled, on the stair case, Madame Cropole, Pittrino, and the waiters and scullions.

The *cortége* advanced slowly, lighted by a thousand flambeaux in the street and at the windows.

After a company of musketeers, and a closely ranked troop of gentlemen, came the litter of M. le Cardinal Mazarin, drawn like a carriage by four black horses. The pages and people of the cardinal marched behind.

Next came the carriage of the queen-mother, with her maids of honor at the doors, her gentlemen on horseback at both sides.

The king then appeared, mounted upon a splendid horse of Saxon race, with a flowing mane. The young prince exhibited, when bowing toward some windows from which issued the most animated acclamations, a noble and handsome countenance illumined by the flambeaux of his pages.

On either side of the king, though a little in the rear, the Prince de Condé, M. Dangeau, and twenty other courtiers, followed by their people and their baggage, closed this veritably triumphant march. The pomp was of a military character.

Some of the courtiers — the elder ones, for instance — wore travelling dresses; but all the rest were clothed in warlike panoply. Many wore the gorget and buff coat of the times of Henry IV. and Louis XIII.

When the king passed before him, the unknown, who had leaned forward over the balcony to obtain a better view, and who had concealed his face by leaning on his arm, felt his heart swell and overflow with a bitter jealousy.

The noise of the trumpets excited him, the popular acclamations deafened him; for a moment he allowed his reason to be absorbed in this flood of lights, tumult, and brilliant images.

"He is a king!" murmured he, in an accent of despair.

Then, before he had recovered from his sombre reverie, all the noise, all the splendor, had passed away. At the angle of the street there remained nothing beneath the stranger but a few hoarse, discordant voices, shouting at intervals, "Vive le Roi!"

There remained likewise the six candles held by the inhabitants of the hostelry of the Medici; that is to say, two for Cropole, two for Pittrino, and one for each scullion. Cropole never ceased repeating, "How good-looking the king is! How strongly he resembles his illustrious father!"

"A handsome likeness!" said Pittrino.

"And what a lofty carriage he has!" added Madame Cropole, already in promiscuous commentary with her neighbors of both sexes.

Cropole was feeding their gossip with his own personal remarks, without observing that an old man on foot, but leading a small Irish horse by the bridle, was endeavoring to penetrate the crowd of men and women which blocked up the entrance to the Medici. But at that moment the voice of the stranger was heard from the window.

"Make way, Monsieur host, to the entrance of your house!"

Cropole turned round, and on seeing the old man, cleared a passage for him.

The window was instantly closed.

Pittrino pointed out the way to the newly arrived guest, who entered without uttering a word.

The stranger waited for him on the landing. He opened his arms to the old man, and would have led him to a seat; but he resisted.

"Oh, no, no, my Lord!" said he. "Sit down in your presence? — never!"

"Parry," cried the gentleman, "I beg you will; you come from England, — you come so far. Ah! it is not for your age to undergo the fatigues my service requires. Rest yourself."

"I have my reply to give your Lordship, in the first place."

"Parry, I conjure you tell me nothing; for if your news had been good, you would not have begun in such a manner. You hesitate, which proves that the news is bad."

"My Lord," said the old man, "do not hasten to alarm yourself; all is not lost, I hope. There is need of energy, of perseverance, but more particularly of resignation."

"Parry," said the young man, "I have reached this

place through a thousand snares and after a thousand difficulties: can you doubt my energy? I have meditated this journey ten years, in spite of all counsels and all obstacles: have you faith in my perseverance? I have this evening sold the last of my father's diamonds; for I had nothing wherewith to pay for my lodgings, and my host was about to turn me out."

Parry made a gesture of indignation, to which the young man replied by a pressure of the hand and a smile.

"I have still two hundred and seventy-four pistoles left, and I feel myself rich. I do not despair, Parry: have you faith in my resignation?"

The old man raised his trembling hands towards heaven.

"Let me know," said the stranger, — "disguise nothing from me — what has happened."

"My recital will be short, my Lord; but, in the name of Heaven, do not tremble so."

"It is impatience, Parry. Come, what did the general say to you?"

"At first the general would not receive me."

"He took you for a spy?"

"Yes, my Lord; but I wrote him a letter."

"Well?"

"He received it, and read it, my Lord."

"Did that letter thoroughly explain my position and my views?"

"Oh yes!" said Parry, with a sad smile; "it faithfully pictured your very thoughts."

"Well — then, Parry?"

"Then the general sent me back the letter by an aide-de-camp, informing me that if I were found the next day within the circumscription of his command, he would have me arrested."

"Arrested!" murmured the young man. "What! arrest you, my most faithful servant?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"And notwithstanding you had signed the name Parry?"

"Plainly, my Lord; and the aide-de-camp had known me at St. James's, and at Whitehall too," added the old man, with a sigh.

The young man leaned forward, thoughtful and sad.

"Ay, that's what he did before his people," said he, endeavoring to cheat himself with hopes. "But privately — between you and him — what did he do? Answer!"

"Alas! my Lord, he sent to me four cavaliers, who gave me the horse with which you just now saw me come back. These cavaliers conducted me, in great haste, to the little port of Tenby, threw me rather than embarked me into a fishing-boat about to sail for Brittany, and here I am."

"Oh!" sighed the young man, clasping his neck convulsively with his hand, and with a sob. "Parry, is that all? — is that all?"

"Yes, my Lord; that is all."

After this brief reply ensued a long interval of silence, broken only by the convulsive beating of the heel of the young man on the floor.

The old man endeavored to change the conversation; it was leading to thoughts much too sinister.

"My Lord," said he, "what is the meaning of all the noise which preceded me? What are these people crying 'Vive le Roi!' for? What king do they mean, and what are all these lights for?"

"Ah, Parry," replied the young man, ironically, "don't you know that this is the King of France visiting his good city of Blois? All those trumpets are his; all those gilded housings are his; all those gentlemen wear swords that are

his. His mother precedes him in a carriage magnificently incrusted with silver and gold. Happy mother! His minister heaps up millions, and conducts him to a rich bride. Then all these people rejoice; they love their king, they hail him with their acclamations, and they cry, 'Vive le Roi! Vive le Roi!'"

"Well, well, my Lord," said Parry, more uneasy at this turn of the conversation than he had been before.

"You know," resumed the unknown, "that *my* mother and *my* sister, while all this is going on in honor of the King of France, have neither money nor bread; you know that I myself shall be poor and degraded within a fortnight, when all Europe will become acquainted with what you have told me. Parry, are there not examples in which a man of my condition should himself—"

"My Lord, in the name of Heaven—"

"You are right, Parry. I am a coward; and if I do nothing for myself, what will God do? No, no; I have two arms, Parry, and I have a sword;" and he struck his arm violently with his hand, and took down his sword, which hung against the wall.

"What are you going to do, my Lord?"

"What am I going to do, Parry? What every one in my family does. My mother lives on public charity; my sister begs for my mother; I have, somewhere or other, brothers who equally beg for themselves; and I, the eldest, will go and do as all the rest do,—I will go and ask charity!"

And at these words, which he finished sharply with a nervous and terrible laugh, the young man girded on his sword, took his hat from the trunk, fastened to his shoulder a black cloak, which he had worn during all his journey, and pressing the hands of the old man, who watched his proceedings with a look of anxiety,—

"My good Parry," said he, "order a fire. Drink, eat, sleep, and be happy; let us both be happy, my faithful friend, my only friend. We are rich, as rich as kings!"

He struck the bag of pistoles with his clenched hands as he spoke, and it fell heavily to the ground. He resumed that dismal laugh which had so alarmed Parry; and while the whole household was screaming, singing, and preparing to install the travellers who had been preceded by their lackeys, he glided out by the principal entrance into the street, where the old man, who had gone to the window, lost sight of him in a moment.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT HIS MAJESTY KING LOUIS XIV. WAS AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-TWO.

It has been seen, by the account we have endeavored to give of it, that the *entrée* of King Louis XIV. into the city of Blois had been noisy and brilliant; his young Majesty had therefore appeared perfectly satisfied with it.

On arriving beneath the porch of the Castle of the States, the king met, surrounded by his guards and gentlemen, with his royal Highness the Duke, Gaston of Orléans, whose physiognomy, naturally rather majestic, had borrowed on this solemn occasion a fresh lustre and a fresh dignity. On her part, Madame, dressed in her robes of ceremony, awaited, in the interior balcony, the entrance of her nephew. All the windows of the old castle, so deserted and dismal on ordinary days, were resplendent with ladies and lights.

It was, then, to the sound of drums, trumpets, and *vivats*, that the young king crossed the threshold of that castle in which, seventy-two years before, Henry III. had called in the aid of assassination and treachery to keep upon his head and in his house a crown which was already slipping from his brow to fall into another family.

All eyes, after having admired the young king, so handsome and so agreeable, sought for that other king of France, — a king very unlike the former, and so old, so pale, so bent, that people called him the Cardinal Mazarin.

Louis was at this time endowed with all the natural gifts which make the perfect gentleman. His eye was brilliant, mild, and of a clear azure blue; but the most skilful physiognomists, those divers into the soul, on fixing their looks upon it, — if it had been possible for a subject to sustain the glance of the king, — the most skilful physiognomists, we say, would never have been able to fathom the depths of that abyss of mildness. It was with the eyes of the king as with the immense depth of the azure heavens, or with those depths, more terrific and almost as sublime, which the Mediterranean reveals under the keels of its ships in a clear summer day, — a gigantic mirror in which heaven delights to reflect sometimes its stars, sometimes its storms.

The king was short of stature, — he was scarcely five feet two inches; but his youth extenuated this defect, set off likewise by great nobleness in all his movements and by considerable address in all bodily exercises.

Certainly he was already quite a king, and it was a great thing to be a king in that period of traditional devotedness and respect; but as up to that time he had been but seldom and always but poorly shown to the people, since they to whom he was shown saw him by the side of his mother, a tall woman, and Monsieur the Cardinal, a man of fine presence, many found him so little of a king as to say, "Why, the king is not so much of a man as Monsieur the Cardinal!"

Whatever may be thought of these physical observations, which were principally made in the capital, the young king was welcomed as a god by the inhabitants of Blois, and almost like a king by his uncle and aunt, Monsieur and Madame, the inhabitants of the castle.

It must, however, be allowed that when he saw in the hall of reception chairs of equal height placed for him-

self, his mother, the cardinal, and his uncle and aunt, — an arrangement artfully concealed by the semicircular form of the assembly, — Louis XIV. became red with anger, and looked around him to ascertain, by the countenances of those that were present, if this humiliation had been intentionally devised. But as he saw nothing upon the impassive visage of the cardinal, nothing on that of his mother, nothing on those of the assembly, he resigned himself and sat down, taking care to be seated before anybody else.

The gentlemen and ladies were presented to their Majesties and Monsieur the Cardinal.

The king remarked that his mother and he scarcely knew the names of any of the persons who were presented to them; while the cardinal, on the contrary, never failed, with an admirable memory and presence of mind, to talk to every one about his estates, his ancestors, or his children, some of whom he named, — which enchanted those worthy country gentlemen, and confirmed them in the idea that he alone is truly king who knows his subjects, for the same reason that the sun has no rival, because the sun alone warms and gives light.

The study of the young king, which had begun a long time before without anybody suspecting it, was continued then; and he looked around him attentively, to endeavor to make out something in the physiognomies which had at first appeared the most insignificant and trivial.

A collation was served. The king, without daring to call upon the hospitality of his uncle, had waited for it impatiently. This time, therefore, he had all the honors due, if not to his rank, at least to his appetite.

As to the cardinal, he contented himself with touching with his withered lips a *bouillon*, served in a gold cup.

The all-powerful minister, who had taken her regency from the queen and his royalty from the king, had not been able to take from Nature a good stomach.

Anne of Austria, already suffering from the cancer which six or eight years after caused her death, ate very little more than the cardinal.

As to Monsieur, already puffed up with the great event which had taken place in his provincial life, he ate nothing whatever.

Madame alone, like a true Lorrainer, kept pace with his Majesty; so that Louis XIV., who, without this partner, might have eaten nearly alone, was at first much pleased with his aunt, and afterwards with M. de Saint-Remy, her *maître d'hôtel*, who had really distinguished himself.

The collation over, at a sign of approbation from M. de Mazarin, the king arose, and, at the invitation of his aunt, walked about among the ranks of the assembly.

The ladies then observed — there are certain things for which women are as good observers at Blois as at Paris — the ladies then observed that Louis XIV. had a prompt and bold look, which premised a distinguished appreciator of beauty. The men, on their part, observed that the prince was proud and haughty, — that he loved to look down those who fixed their eyes upon him too long or too earnestly, which gave presage of a master.

Louis XIV. had accomplished about a third of his review, when his ears were struck with a word which his Eminence pronounced while conversing with Monsieur.

This word was the name of a woman.

Scarcely had Louis XIV. heard this word than he heard, or rather listened to, nothing else; and neglecting the arc of the circle which awaited his visit, his object

seemed to be to come as quickly as possible to the extremity of the curve.

Monsieur, like a good courtier, was inquiring of Monsieur the Cardinal after the health of his nieces, — for, five or six years before, three nieces to the cardinal had arrived from Italy; they were Mesdemoiselles Hortense, Olympe, and Marie de Mancini. Monsieur, then, inquired of the cardinal concerning the health of his nieces; he regretted, he said, not having the pleasure of receiving them at the same time with their uncle; they must certainly have grown in stature, beauty, and grace, as they had promised to do the last time Monsieur had seen them.

What had first struck the king was a certain contrast in the voices of the two interlocutors. The voice of Monsieur was calm and natural while he spoke thus, while that of M. de Mazarin in reply jumped by a note and a half above his ordinary tone. It might have been said that he wished that voice to strike, at the end of the salon, an ear that was receding too far.

"Monseigneur," replied he, "Mesdemoiselles de Mazarin have still to finish their education; they have duties to fulfil, and a position to make. An abode in a young and brilliant court tends to frivolity."

Louis, at this last sentence, smiled sadly. The court was young, it was true, but the avarice of the cardinal had taken good care that it should not be brilliant.

"You have, nevertheless, no intention," replied Monsieur, "to cloister them or make them *bourgeoises?*"

"Not at all," replied the cardinal, forcing his Italian pronunciation in such a manner that, from being soft and velvety, it became sharp and vibrating, — "not at all; I have a full and fixed intention to marry them, and that as well as I shall be able."

"Parties will not be wanting, Monsieur the Cardinal," replied Monsieur, with a *bonhommie* worthy of one tradesman congratulating another.

"I hope not, Monseigneur; and the more confidently since God has been pleased to give them grace, intelligence, and beauty."

During this conversation Louis XIV., conducted by Madame, accomplished, as we have described, the circle of presentations.

"Mademoiselle Arnoux," said the princess, presenting to his Majesty a fat, fair girl of two-and-twenty, who at a village *fête* might have been taken for a peasant in Sunday finery, — "the daughter of my music-mistress."

The king smiled. Madame had never been able to extract four correct notes from either viol or harpsichord.

"Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais," continued Madame; "a young lady of rank, and my good attendant."

This time it was not the king that smiled; it was the young lady presented, because, for the first time in her life, she heard given to her by Madame, who generally showed no tendency to spoil her, such an honorable qualification.

Our old acquaintance Montalais, therefore, made his Majesty a profound courtesy, the more respectful from the necessity she was under of concealing certain contractions of her laughing lips, which the king might not have attributed to their real cause.

It was just at this moment that the king caught the word which startled him.

"And the name of the third?" asked Monsieur.

"Marie, Monseigneur," replied the cardinal.

There was doubtless some magical influence in that word; for, as we have said, the king started at hearing it, and drew Madame towards the middle of the circle, as

if he wished to put some confidential question to her, but, in reality, for the sake of getting nearer to the cardinal.

"Madame my aunt," said he, laughing, and in a suppressed voice, "my geography master did not teach me that Blois was at such an immense distance from Paris."

"What do you mean, Nephew?" asked Madame.

"Why, because it would appear that it requires several years for fashions to travel the distance! — Look at those young ladies!"

"Well; I know them all."

"Some of them are pretty."

"Don't say that too loud, Monsieur my nephew; you will drive them wild."

"Stop a bit, stop a bit, dear aunt!" said the king, smiling; "for the second part of my sentence will serve as a corrective to the first. Well, my dear aunt, some of them appear old and others ugly, thanks to their ten-year-old fashions."

"But, Sire, Blois is only five days' journey from Paris."

"Yes, that is it," said the king; "two years behind for each day."

"Indeed! do you really think so? Well, that is strange! It never struck me."

"Now, look, Aunt," said Louis XIV., drawing still nearer to Mazarin, under the pretext of gaining a better point of view, "look at that simple white dress by the side of those antiquated specimens of finery and those pretentious coiffures. She is probably one of my mother's maids of honor, though I don't know her. See what an artless figure, what gracious manners! Well, now, that is a woman; all the rest are only clothes."

"Ah! ah! my dear nephew!" replied Madame, laughing; "permit me to tell you that your divinatory science

is at fault for once. The young lady you honor with your praise is not a Parisian, but a Blaisoise."

"Oh, Aunt!" replied the king, with a look of doubt.

"Come here, Louise," said Madame.

And the fair girl, already known to you under that name, approached them, timid and blushing, and almost bent beneath the royal glance.

"Mademoiselle Louise Françoise de la Beaume Leblanc, daughter of the Marquis de la Vallière," said Madame, ceremoniously.

The young girl bowed with so much grace, mingled with the profound timidity inspired by the presence of the king, that the latter lost, while looking at her, a few words of the conversation of Monsieur and the cardinal.

"Daughter-in-law," continued Madame, "of M. de Saint-Remy, my *maître d'hôtel*, who presided over the confection of that excellent *daube truffée* which your Majesty seemed so much to appreciate."

No grace, no youth, no beauty, could stand out against such a presentation. The king smiled. Whether the words of Madame were a pleasantry, or uttered in all innocence, they proved the pitiless immolation of everything that Louis had found charming or poetic in the young girl. Mademoiselle de la Vallière, for Madame, and by rebound for the king, was, for a moment, no more than the daughter of a man of a superior talent over *dindes truffées*.

But princes are thus constituted. The gods, too, were just like this in Olympus. Diana and Venus, no doubt, abused the beautiful Alcmena and poor Io, when they descended, for distraction's sake, to speak, amid nectar and ambrosia, of mortal beauties at the table of Jupiter.

Fortunately, Louise was so bent in her reverential salute that she did not catch either Madame's words or

the king's smile. In fact, if the poor child, who had so much good taste as alone to have chosen to dress herself in white amidst all her companions, — if that dove's heart, so easily accessible to painful emotions, had been touched by the cruel words of Madame or the egotistical cold smile of the king, it would have annihilated her.

And Montalais herself, the girl of ingenious ideas, would not have attempted to recall her to life; for ridicule kills beauty even.

But fortunately, as we have said, Louise, whose ears were buzzing, and whose eyes were veiled by timidity, — Louise saw nothing and heard nothing; and the king, who had his attention still directed to the conversation of the cardinal and his uncle, hastened to return to them.

He came up just at the moment Mazarin terminated by saying: "Marie, as well as her sisters, has just set off for Brouage. I make them follow the bank of the Loire opposite to that along which we have travelled; and if I calculate their progress correctly, according to the orders I have given, they will to-morrow be opposite Blois."

These words were pronounced with that tact — that measure, that distinctness of tone, of intention and reach — which made Signor Giulio Mazarini the first comedian in the world.

It resulted that they went straight to the heart of Louis XIV., and that the cardinal, on turning round at the simple noise of the approaching footsteps of his Majesty, saw the immediate effect of them upon the countenance of his pupil, — an effect betrayed to the keen eyes of his Eminence by a slight increase of color. But what was the ventilating of such a secret to him whose craft had for twenty years deceived all the diplomatists of Europe?

From the moment the young king heard these last

words, he appeared as if he had received a poisoned arrow in his heart. He could not remain quiet in one place, but cast around an uncertain, dead, and aimless look over the assembly. He with his eyes interrogated his mother more than twenty times; but she, given up to the pleasure of conversing with her sister-in-law, and likewise constrained by the glance of Mazarin, did not appear to comprehend any of the supplications conveyed by the looks of her son.

From this moment, music, lights, flowers, beauties, all became odious and insipid to Louis XIV. After he had a hundred times bitten his lips, stretched his legs and his arms like a well-bred child who, without daring to gape, exhausts all the modes of evincing his weariness, without having uselessly again implored his mother and the minister, he turned a despairing look towards the door, — that is to say, towards liberty.

At this door, leaning against the embrasure, he saw, standing out strongly, a figure with a brown and lofty countenance, an aquiline nose, a stern but brilliant eye, gray and long hair, a black mustache, — the true type of military beauty, — whose gorget, more sparkling than a mirror, broke all the reflected lights which concentrated upon it, and sent them back in flashes. This officer wore his gray hat with its long red plume upon his head, — a proof that he was called there by duty, and not by pleasure. If he had been brought thither by pleasure, if he had been a courtier instead of a soldier, — as pleasure must always be paid for at some price, — he would have held his hat in his hand.

What proved still better that this officer was upon duty, and was accomplishing a task to which he was accustomed, was that he watched, with folded arms, remarkable indifference, and supreme apathy, the joys

and ennuis of this *fête*. Above all, he appeared, — like a philosopher, and all old soldiers are philosophers, — he appeared, above all, to comprehend the ennuis infinitely better than the joys; but in the one he took his part, knowing very well how to do without the other.

Now, he was leaning, as we have said, against the carved door-frame when the melancholy, weary eyes of the king by chance met his.

It was not the first time, as it appeared, that the eyes of the officer had met those eyes, and he was perfectly acquainted with the expression of them; for as soon as he had cast his own look upon the countenance of Louis XIV., and had read by it what was passing in his heart, — that is to say, all the ennui that oppressed him, all the timid desire to go out which agitated him, — he perceived he must render the king a service without his commanding it, almost in spite of himself. Boldly, therefore, as if he had given the word of command to cavalry in battle, "On the king's service!" cried he in a clear, sonorous voice.

At these words, which produced the effect of a peal of thunder, prevailing over the orchestra, the singing, and the buzz of the promenaders, the cardinal and the queen-mother looked at the king with surprise.

Louis XIV., pale but resolved, supported as he was by that intuition of his own thought which he had found in the mind of the officer of Musketeers, and which he had just manifested by the order given, arose from his chair, and took a step towards the door.

"Are you going, my son?" said the queen, while Mazarin satisfied himself with interrogating by a look which might have appeared mild if it had not been so piercing.

"Yes, Madame," replied the king; "I am fatigued, and, besides, wish to write this evening."

A smile stole over the lips of the minister, who appeared, by a bend of the head, to give the king permission.

Monsieur and Madame hastened to give orders to the officers who presented themselves.

The king bowed, crossed the hall, and gained the door, where a hedge of twenty musketeers awaited him. At the extremity of this hedge stood the officer, impassible, with his drawn sword in his hand. The king passed, and all the crowd stood on tip-toe to have one more look at him.

Ten musketeers, opening the crowd of the antechambers and the steps, made way for his Majesty. The other ten surrounded the king and Monsieur, who had insisted upon accompanying his Majesty. The domestics walked behind. This little *cortége* escorted the king to the chamber destined for him. The appartement was the same that had been occupied by Henry III. during his sojourn in the States.

Monsieur had given his orders. The musketeers, led by their officer, took possession of the little passage by which one wing of the castle communicates with the other. The beginning of this passage was a small, square antechamber, dark even in the finest days. Monsieur stopped Louis XIV.

"You are passing now, Sire," said he, "the very spot where the Duc de Guise received the first stab of the poniard."

The king was ignorant of all historical matters; he had heard of the fact, but he knew nothing of the localities or the details.

"Ah!" said he, with a shudder.

And he stopped. The rest, both behind him and before him, stopped likewise.

"The duke, Sire," continued Gaston, "was nearly where I stand; he was walking in the same direction as your Majesty; M. de Lorgnes was exactly where your lieutenant of Musketeers is; M. de Saint-Malme and his Majesty's Ordinaries were behind him and around him. It was here that he was struck."

The king turned towards his officer, and saw something like a cloud pass over his martial and daring countenance.

"Yes, from behind!" murmured the lieutenant, with a gesture of supreme disdain, and he endeavored to resume the march, as if ill at ease at being between walls formerly defiled by treachery.

But the king, who appeared to wish to be informed, was disposed to give another look at this dismal spot.

Gaston perceived his nephew's desire.

"Look, Sire!" said he, taking a flambeau from the hands of M. de Saint Remy, "this is where he fell. There was a bed there, the curtains of which he tore with catching at them."

"Why does the floor seem hollowed out at this spot?" asked Louis.

"Because it was here the blood flowed," replied Gaston. "The blood penetrated deeply into the oak, and it was only by cutting it out that they succeeded in making it disappear; and even then," added Gaston, pointing the flambeau to the spot, — "even then this red stain resisted all the attempts made to destroy it."

Louis XIV. raised his head. Perhaps he was thinking of that bloody trace which had once been shown him at the Louvre, and which, as a pendant to that of Blois, had been made there one day by the king his father with the blood of Concini.

"Let us go on," said he.

The march was resumed promptly; for emotion, no doubt, had given to the voice of the young prince a tone of command which was not customary with him. When arrived at the appartement destined for the king, which communicated not only with the little passage we have passed through, but further with the great staircase leading to the court, —

"Will your Majesty," said Gaston, "condescend to occupy this appartement, all unworthy as it is to receive you?"

"Uncle," replied the young king, "I render you my thanks for your cordial hospitality."

Gaston bowed to his nephew, who embraced him, and then went out.

Of the twenty musketeers who had accompanied the king, ten reconducted Monsieur to the reception-rooms, which were not yet empty, notwithstanding the king had retired.

The ten others were posted by their officer, who himself explored, in five minutes, all the localities, with that cold and certain glance which not even habit gives unless that glance belong to genius. Then, when all were placed, he chose as his headquarters the antechamber, in which he found a large *fauteuil*, a lamp, some wine, some water, and some dry bread. He revived the light, drank half a glass of wine, curled his lip with a smile full of expression, installed himself in his large arm-chair, and made preparations for sleeping.

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH THE UNKNOWN OF THE HOSTELRY OF THE MEDICI LOSES HIS INCOGNITO.

This officer, who was sleeping, or preparing to sleep, was, notwithstanding his careless air, charged with a serious responsibility.

Lieutenant of the king's Musketeers, he commanded all the company which came from Paris, and that company consisted of a hundred and twenty men; but, with the exception of the twenty of whom we have spoken, the other hundred were engaged in guarding the queen-mother, and more particularly the cardinal.

Monsignor Giulio Mazarini economized the travelling expenses of his guards; he consequently used the king's, and that largely, since he took fifty of them for himself, — a peculiarity which would not have failed to strike any one unacquainted with the usages of that court.

What would to a stranger still further have appeared, if not inconvenient, at least extraordinary, was that the side of the castle destined for Monsieur the Cardinal was brilliant, light, and cheerful. The musketeers there mounted guard before every door, and allowed no one to enter except the couriers, who, even while he was travelling, followed the cardinal for the carrying on of his correspondence.

Twenty men were on duty with the queen-mother; thirty rested, in order to relieve their companions the next day.

On the king's side, on the contrary, were darkness, silence, and solitude. When once the doors were closed, there was no longer an appearance of royalty. All the servitors had by degrees retired. Monsieur the Prince had sent to know if his Majesty required his attendance; and on the customary "No" of the lieutenant of Musketeers, who was habituated to the question and the reply, all prepared to sink into the arms of sleep, as if in the dwelling of a good citizen.

And yet it was possible to hear from the side of the house occupied by the young king the music of the banquet, and to see the windows of the great hall richly illuminated.

Ten minutes after his installation in his appartement, Louis XIV. had been able to learn, by a movement much more distinguished than that which marked his own departure, the departure of the cardinal, who, in his turn, sought his bedroom, accompanied by a large escort of ladies and gentlemen.

Besides, to perceive this movement, he had nothing to do but to look out at his window, the shutters of which had not been closed.

His Eminence crossed the court, conducted by Monsieur, who himself held a flambeau; then followed the queen-mother, to whom Madame familiarly gave her arm; and both walked chatting away like two old friends.

Behind these two couples filed nobles, ladies, pages, and officers; flambeaux gleamed over the whole court, like the moving reflections of a conflagration. Then the noise of steps and voices became lost in the upper floors of the castle.

No one was then thinking of the king, who, leaning on his elbow at the window, had sadly seen all that light pass away, and heard that noise die off, — no, not one, if

it was not that unknown of the hostelry of the Medici, whom we have seen go out enveloped in his cloak.

He had come straight up to the castle, and had, with his melancholy countenance, wandered round and round the palace, from which the people had not yet departed; and finding that no one guarded the great entrance, or the porch, seeing that the soldiers of Monsieur were fraternizing with the royal soldiers, — that is to say, swallowing Beaugency at discretion, or rather indiscretion — the unknown penetrated through the crowd, then ascended to the court, and came to the landing of the staircase leading to the cardinal's apartment.

What, according to all probability, induced him to direct his steps that way, was the splendor of the flambeaux, and the busy air of the pages and domestics. But he was stopped short by a presented musket and the cry of the sentinel.

"Where are you going, my friend?" asked the soldier.

"I am going to the king's appartement," replied the unknown, haughtily but tranquilly.

The soldier called one of his Eminence's officers, who, in the tone in which a youth in office directs a solicitor to a minister, let fall these words: "The other staircase, in front." And the officer without further notice of the unknown, resumed his interrupted conversation.

The stranger, without reply, directed his steps towards the staircase pointed out to him. On this side no more noise, no more flambeaux: obscurity, through which a sentinel glided like a shadow; silence, which permitted him to hear the sound of his own footsteps, accompanied with the jingling of his spurs upon the stone slabs.

This guard was one of the twenty musketeers appointed for attendance upon the king, and he mounted guard with the stiffness and consciousness of a statue.

"Who goes there?" said the guard.

"A friend," replied the unknown.

"What do you want?"

"To speak to the king."

"Do you, my dear Monsieur? That can hardly be."

"Why not?"

"Because the king has gone to bed."

"Gone to bed already?"

"Yes."

"No matter; I must speak to him."

"And I tell you that is impossible."

"And yet —"

"Go back!"

"Do you require the word?"

"I have no account to render to you. Stand back!"

And this time the soldier accompanied his word with a threatening gesture; but the unknown stirred no more than if his feet had taken root.

"Monsieur the musketeer," said he, "are you a gentleman?"

"I have that honor."

"Very well! I also am one; and between gentlemen some consideration ought to be observed."

The soldier lowered his arms, overcome by the dignity with which these words were pronounced.

"Speak, Monsieur," said he; "and if you ask me anything in my power —"

"Thank you. You have an officer, have you not?"

"Our lieutenant? Yes, Monsieur."

"Well, I wish to speak to him."

"Oh, that 's a different thing. Come up, Monsieur."

The unknown saluted the soldier in a lofty fashion, and ascended the staircase; while the cry, "Lieutenant, a

visit!" transmitted from sentinel to sentinel, preceded the unknown, and disturbed the slumbers of the officer.

Dragging on his boot, rubbing his eyes, and hooking his cloak, the lieutenant made three steps towards the stranger.

"What can I do to serve you, Monsieur?" asked he.

"You are the officer on duty, lieutenant of the Musketeers, are you?"

"I have that honor," replied the officer.

"Monsieur, it is absolutely necessary that I speak to the king."

The lieutenant looked attentively at the unknown; and in that look, although so brief, he saw all he wished to see, — that is to say, a person of high distinction in an ordinary dress.

"I do not suppose you to be mad," replied he; "and yet you seem to me to be in a condition to know, Monsieur, that people do not enter a king's apartments in this manner without his consent."

"He will consent."

"Monsieur, permit me to doubt that. The king has retired this quarter of an hour; he must be now undressing. Besides, the word is given."

"When he knows who I am, he will recall the word."

The officer was more and more surprised, more and more subdued.

"If I consent to announce you, may I at least know whom to announce, Monsieur?"

"You will announce his Majesty Charles II., King of England, Scotland, and Ireland."

The officer uttered a cry of astonishment, drew back, and there might be seen upon his pallid countenance one of the most poignant emotions that ever an energetic man endeavored to drive back to his heart.

"Oh yes, Sire; in fact," said he, "I ought to have recognized you."

"You have seen my portrait, then?"

"No, Sire."

"Or else you have seen me formerly at court, before I was driven from France!"

"No, Sire, it is not even that."

"How, then, could you have recognized me, if you have never seen my portrait or my person?"

"Sire, I saw his Majesty your father at a terrible moment."

"The day —"

"Yes."

A dark cloud passed over the brow of the prince; then, dashing his hand across it, "Do you still see any difficulty in announcing me?" said he.

"Sire, pardon me," replied the officer, "but I could not imagine a king under so simple an exterior; and yet I had the honor to tell your Majesty just now that I had seen Charles I. — But pardon me, Monsieur; I will go and inform the king."

But returning after going a few steps, "Your Majesty is desirous, without doubt, that this interview should be a secret?" said he.

"I do not require it; but if it were possible to preserve it —"

"It is possible, Sire, for I can dispense with informing the first gentleman on duty; but, for that, your Majesty must please to consent to give up your sword."

"True, true; I had forgotten that no one armed is permitted to enter the chamber of a king of France."

"Your Majesty will form an exception, if you wish it; but then I shall avoid my responsibility by informing the king's attendant."

"Here is my sword, Monsieur. Will you now please to announce me to his Majesty?"

"Instantly, Sire." And the officer immediately went and knocked at the door of communication, which the valet opened to him.

"His Majesty the King of England!" said the officer.

"His Majesty the King of England!" replied his *valet de chambre.*

At these words a gentleman opened the folding-doors of the king's apartment, and Louis XIV. was seen, without hat or sword, and his doublet open, advancing with signs of the greatest surprise.

"You, my brother, — you at Blois!" cried Louis XIV., dismissing with a gesture both the gentleman and the *valet de chambre*, who passed out into the next apartment.

"Sire," replied Charles II., "I was going to Paris, in the hope of seeing your Majesty, when report informed me of your approaching arrival in this city. I therefore prolonged my abode here, having something very particular to communicate to you."

"Will this closet suit you, my brother?"

"Perfectly well, Sire, for I think no one can hear us here."

"I have dismissed my gentleman and my watcher; they are in the next chamber. There, behind that partition, is an unoccupied closet, looking into the antechamber, and in that antechamber you found nobody but a solitary officer, did you?"

"No, Sire."

"Well, then, speak, my brother; I listen to you."

"Sire, I commence, and entreat your Majesty to have pity on the misfortunes of our house."

The King of France colored, and drew his chair closer to that of the King of England.

"Sire," said Charles II., "I have no need to ask if your Majesty is acquainted with the details of my deplorable history."

Louis XIV. blushed this time more strongly than before; then, stretching forth his hand to that of the King of England, "My brother," said he, "I am ashamed to say so, but the cardinal scarcely ever speaks of political affairs before me. Still more, formerly I used to get Laporte, my *valet de chambre*, to read historical subjects to me; but he put a stop to these readings, and took away Laporte from me. So that I beg my brother Charles to tell me all those matters as to a man who knows nothing."

"Well, Sire, I think that by taking things from the beginning I shall have a better chance of touching the heart of your Majesty."

"Speak on, my brother, speak on."

"You know, Sire, that, being called in 1650 to Edinburgh, during Cromwell's expedition into Ireland, I was crowned at Scone. A year after, wounded in one of the provinces he had usurped, Cromwell returned upon us. To meet him was my object; to leave Scotland was my wish."

"And yet," interrupted the young king, "Scotland is almost your native country, is it not, my brother?"

"Yes; but the Scots were cruel compatriots for me, Sire: they had forced me to forsake the religion of my fathers; they had hung Lord Montrose, the most devoted of my servants, because he was not a Covenanter; and as the poor martyr, to whom they had offered a favor when dying, had asked that his body might be cut into as many pieces as there are cities in Scotland, in order that evidence of his fidelity might be met with everywhere, I could not leave one city, or go into another, without passing under some fragments of a body which had acted, fought, and breathed for me.

"By a bold march I passed through Cromwell's army, and entered England. The Protector set out in pursuit of this strange flight, which had a crown for its object. If I had been able to reach London before him, without doubt the prize of the race would have been mine; but he overtook me at Worcester.

"The genius of England was no longer with us, but with him. On the 3d of September, 1651, Sire, — the anniversary of the other battle of Dunbar, so fatal to the Scots, — I was conquered. Two thousand men fell around me before I thought of retreating a step. At length I was obliged to fly.

"From that moment my history became a romance. Pursued with persistent inveteracy, I cut off my hair, I disguised myself as a woodman. One day spent amidst the branches of an oak gave to that tree the name of the royal oak, which it bears to this day. My adventures in the county of Stafford, whence I escaped with the daughter of my host on a pillion behind me, still fill the tales of the country firesides, and would furnish matter for ballads. I will some day write all this, Sire, for the instruction of my brother kings.

"I will first tell how, on arriving at the residence of Mr. Norton, I met with a court chaplain, who was looking on at a party playing at skittles, and an old servant who named me, bursting into tears, and who was as near and as certainly killing me by his fidelity as another might have been by treachery. Then I will tell of my terrors — yes, Sire, of my terrors — when, at the house of Colonel Windham, a farrier who came to shoe our horses declared they had been shod in the north."

"How strange!" murmured Louis XIV. "I never heard anything of all that; I was only told of your embarkation at Brighthelmstone and your landing in Normandy."

"Oh!" exclaimed Charles, "if Heaven permits kings to be thus ignorant of the histories of each other, how can they render assistance to their brothers who need it?"

"But tell me," continued Louis XIV., "how, after being so roughly received in England, you can still hope for anything from that unhappy country and that rebellious people?"

"Oh, Sire! since the battle of Worcester everything is changed there. Cromwell is dead, after having signed a treaty with France, in which his name was placed above yours. He died on the 3d of September, 1658, a fresh anniversary of the battles of Dunbar and Worcester."

"His son has succeeded him."

"But certain men have a family, Sire, and no heir. The inheritance of Oliver was too heavy for Richard, — Richard, who was neither a Republican nor a Royalist; Richard, who allowed his guards to eat his dinner and his generals to govern the Republic. Richard abdicated the protectorate on the 22d of April, 1659, more than a year ago, Sire.

"Since that time England has been nothing but a gaming-house, in which the players throw dice for the crown of my father. The two most eager players are Lambert and Monk. Well, Sire, I, in my turn, wish to take part in this game, where the stakes are thrown upon my royal mantle. Sire, it only requires a million to corrupt one of these players and make an ally of him, or two hundred of your gentlemen to drive them out of my palace at Whitehall, as Jesus drove the money-changers from the temple."

"You come, then," replied Louis XIV., "to ask me —"

"For your assistance, — that is to say, not only for that which kings owe to each other, but that which simple Christians owe to each other, — your assistance, Sire,

either in money or men. Your assistance, Sire, and within a month, whether I oppose Lambert to Monk, or Monk to Lambert, I shall have re-conquered my paternal inheritance, without having cost my country a guinea, or my subjects a drop of blood; for they are now all drunk with revolutions, protectorates, and republics, and ask nothing better than to fall staggering to sleep in the arms of royalty. Your assistance, Sire, and I shall owe you more than I owe my father, — my poor father, who bought at so dear a rate the ruin of our house! You may judge, Sire, whether I am unhappy, whether I am in despair, for I accuse my own father!"

And the blood mounted to the pale face of Charles II., who remained for an instant with his head between his hands, and as if blinded by that blood which appeared to revolt against the filial blasphemy.

The young king was not less affected than his elder brother; he threw himself about in his *fauteuil*, and could not find a single word of reply.

Charles II., to whom ten years in age gave a superior strength to master his emotions, recovered his speech the first.

"Sire," said he, "your reply? I wait for it as a criminal waits for his sentence. Must I die?"

"My brother," replied the French prince, "you ask me for a million, — me, who was never possessed of a quarter of that sum! I possess nothing. I am no more king of France than you are king of England. I am a name, a cipher dressed in *fleur-de-lised* velvet, — that is all. I am upon a visible throne; that is my only advantage over your Majesty. I have nothing; I can do nothing."

"Can it be so?" exclaimed Charles II.

"My brother," said Louis, sinking his voice, "I have undergone miseries with which my poorest gentlemen are

unacquainted. If my poor Laporte were here, he would tell you that I have slept in ragged sheets, through the holes of which my legs have passed; he would tell you that afterwards, when I asked for carriages, they brought me conveyances half destroyed by the rats of the coach-houses; he would tell you that when I asked for my dinner, the servants went to the cardinal's kitchen to inquire if there were anything for the king to eat. And look! to-day, this very day even, when I am twenty-two years of age, — to-day, when I have attained the grade of the majority of kings, — to-day, when I ought to have the key of the treasury, the direction of policy, the supremacy in peace and war, — cast your eyes around me, see how I am left! Look at this abandonment, this disdain, this silence! While yonder, — look yonder! View the bustle, the lights, the homage! There! — there you see the real king of France, my brother!"

"In the cardinal's apartments?"

"Yes, in the cardinal's apartments."

"Then I am condemned, Sire?"

Louis XIV. made no reply.

"Condemned is the word; for I will never solicit him who left my mother and sister to die with cold and hunger — the daughter and granddaughter of Henry IV. — if M. de Retz and the Parliament had not sent them wood and bread."

"To die?" murmured Louis XIV.

"Well!" continued the King of England, "poor Charles II., grandson of Henry IV., as you are, Sire, having neither Parliament nor Cardinal de Retz to apply to, will die of hunger, as his mother and sister had nearly done."

Louis knitted his brow, and twisted violently the lace of his ruffles.

This prostration, this immobility, serving as a mark to

an emotion so visible, struck Charles II., and he took the young man's hand.

"Thanks," said he, "my brother! You pity me, and that is all I can require of you in your present situation."

"Sire," said Louis XIV., with a sudden impulse, and raising his head, "it is a million you require, or two hundred gentlemen, I think you say?"

"Sire, a million would be quite sufficient."

"That is very little."

"Offered to a single man, it is a great deal. Convictions have been purchased at a much lower price; and I should have to deal only with venalities."

"Two hundred gentlemen! Reflect! — that is little more than a single company."

"Sire, there is in our family a tradition that four men, four French gentlemen, devoted to my father, were near saving my father, though condemned by a parliament, guarded by an army, and surrounded by a nation."

"Then, if I can procure you a million, or two hundred gentlemen, you will be satisfied; and you will consider me your well-affectioned brother?"

"I shall consider you as my savior; and if I recover the throne of my father, England will be, as long as I reign at least, a sister to France, as you will have been a brother to me."

"Well, my brother," said Louis, rising, "what you hesitate to ask for, I will myself demand; that which I have never done on my own account, I will do on yours. I will go and find the King of France — the other — the rich, the powerful one, I mean. I will myself solicit this million, or these two hundred gentlemen; and — we will see."

"Oh!" cried Charles, "you are a noble friend, Sire — a heart created by God! You save me, my brother;

and if you should ever stand in need of the life you restore me, demand it."

"Silence, my brother, — silence!" said Louis, in a suppressed voice. "Take care that no one hears you! We have not obtained our end yet. To ask money of Mazarin, — that is worse than traversing the enchanted forest, each tree of which enclosed a demon. It is more than setting out to conquer a world."

"But yet, Sire, when you ask it —"

"I have already told you that I never asked," replied Louis, with a haughtiness that made the King of England turn pale.

And as the latter, like a wounded man, made a retreating movement, "Pardon me, my brother," replied he. "I have neither a mother nor a sister who is suffering. My throne is hard and naked, but I am firmly seated on my throne. Pardon me that expression, my brother; it was that of an egotist. I will redeem it, therefore, by a sacrifice, — I will go to Monsieur the Cardinal. Wait for me, if you please, — I will return."

CHAPTER X.

THE ARITHMETIC OF M. DE MAZARIN.

WHILE the king was directing his course rapidly towards the wing of the castle occupied by the cardinal, taking nobody with him but his *valet de chambre*, the officer of Musketeers came out, breathing like a man who has for a long time been forced to hold his breath, from the little cabinet of which we have already spoken, and which the king believed to be quite unoccupied. This little cabinet had formerly been part of the chamber, from which it was only separated by a thin partition; and this partition, which was only for the eye, permitted the least indiscreet ear to hear every word spoken in the chamber.

There was no doubt, then, that this lieutenant of Musketeers had heard all that had passed in his Majesty's apartment.

Warned by the last words of the young king, he came out just in time to salute him on his passage, and to follow him with his eyes till he had disappeared in the corridor.

Then, as soon as he had disappeared, he shook his head after a fashion peculiarly his own, and in a voice which forty years' absence from Gascony had not deprived of its Gascon accent, "A melancholy service," said he, "and a melancholy master!"

These words pronounced, the lieutenant resumed his place in his *fauteuil*, stretched his legs, and closed his eyes, like a man who either sleeps or meditates.

During this short monologue and the *mise-en-scène* that had accompanied it, while the king, through the long corridors of the old castle, proceeded to the apartments of M. de Mazarin, a scene of another sort was being enacted in those apartments.

Mazarin was in bed, suffering a little from the gout. But as he was a man of order, who utilized even pain, he forced his wakefulness to be the humble servant of his labor. He had consequently ordered Bernouin, his *valet de chambre*, to bring him a little traveling-desk, so that he might write in bed. But the gout is not an adversary that allows itself to be conquered so easily; therefore at each movement he made, the pain from dull became sharp.

"Is Brienne there?" asked he of Bernouin.

"No, Monseigneur," replied the *valet de chambre;* "M. de Brienne, with your permission, has gone to bed. But if it is the wish of your Eminence, he can speedily be called."

"No; it is not worth while. Let us see, however. Cursed ciphers!"

And the cardinal began to think, counting on his fingers the while.

"Oh! ciphers, is it?" said Bernouin. "Very well! if your Eminence attempts calculations, I will promise you a pretty headache to-morrow; and with that please to remember M. Guénaud is not here."

"You are right, Bernouin. You must take Brienne's place, my friend. Indeed, I ought to have brought M. Colbert with me. That young man goes on very well, Bernouin, very well; a very orderly youth."

"I do not know," said the *valet de chambre;* "but I don't like the countenance of your young man who goes on so well."

"Well, well, Bernouin! We don't stand in need of your advice. Place yourself there; take the pen, and write."

"I am ready, Monseigneur; what am I to write?"

"There, that's the place; after the two lines already traced."

"I am there."

"Write seven hundred and sixty thousand livres."

"That is written."

"Upon Lyons —" The cardinal appeared to hesitate.

"Upon Lyons," repeated Bernouin.

"Three million nine hundred thousand livres."

"Well, Monseigneur?"

"Upon Bordeaux, seven millions."

"Seven?" repeated Bernouin.

"Yes," said the cardinal, pettishly, "seven." Then, recollecting himself, "You understand, Bernouin," added he, "that all this money is to be spent?"

"Eh! Monseigneur, whether it be to be spent or put away is of very little consequence to me, since none of these millions are mine."

"These millions are the king's; it is the king's money I am reckoning. Well, what were we saying? You always interrupt me!"

"Seven millions upon Bordeaux."

"Ah! yes; that's right. Upon Madrid, four. I give you to understand plainly whom this money belongs to, Bernouin, seeing that everybody has the stupidity to believe me rich in millions. I repel the silly idea. A minister, besides, has nothing of his own. Come, go on! General revenue, seven millions; properties, nine millions. Have you written that, Bernouin?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"In the funds, six hundred thousand livres; various

property, two millions. Ah! I forgot; the furniture of the different châteaux — "

"Must I put 'of the crown'?" asked Bernouin.

"No, no; it is of no use doing that, — that is understood. Have you written that, Bernouin?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"And the ciphers?"

"Stand straight under one another."

"Cast them up, Bernouin."

"Thirty-nine million two hundred and sixty thousand livres, Monseigneur."

"Ah!" cried the cardinal, in a tone of vexation; "there are not yet forty millions!"

Bernouin recommenced the addition.

"No, Monseigneur; there want seven hundred and forty thousand livres."

Mazarin asked for the account, and revised it carefully.

"Yes; but," said Bernouin, "thirty-nine million two hundred and sixty thousand livres make a good round sum."

"Ah, Bernouin; I wish the king had it."

"Your Eminence told me that this money was his Majesty's."

"Doubtless; as clear, as transparent as possible. These thirty-nine millions are bespoken, and much more."

Bernouin smiled after his own fashion — that is, like a man who believes no more than he is willing to believe — while preparing the cardinal's night-draught and putting his pillow to rights.

"Oh!" said Mazarin, when the valet had gone out; "not yet forty millions! I must, however, reach the sum of forty-five millions which I have determined on. But who knows whether I shall have time? I am failing, I depart, I shall never reach it! And yet, who knows that

I may not find two or three millions in the pockets of my good friends the Spaniards? They discovered Peru, those people did, and — what the devil! they must have something left."

As he was speaking thus, entirely occupied with his ciphers, and thinking no more of his gout, repelled by a preoccupation which, with the cardinal, was the most powerful of all preoccupations, Bernouin rushed into the chamber, quite in a fright.

"Well," asked the cardinal, "what is the matter now?"

"The king, Monseigneur, — the king!"

"How? — the king!" said Mazarin, quickly concealing his paper. "The king here! the king at this hour! I thought he was in bed long ago. What is the matter, then?"

Louis XIV. could hear these last words, and see the terrified gesture of the cardinal, rising up in his bed, for he entered the chamber at that moment.

"It is nothing, Monsieur the Cardinal, or at least nothing which can alarm you. It is an important communication which I wish to make to your Eminence to-night, — that is all."

Mazarin immediately thought of the marked attention which the king had given to his words concerning Mademoiselle de Mancini, and the communication appeared to him probably to refer to this source. He recovered his serenity then instantly, and assumed his most agreeable air, — a change of countenance which inspired the king with the greatest joy; and when Louis was seated, —

"Sire," said the cardinal, "I ought certainly to listen to your Majesty standing, but the violence of my complaint — "

"No ceremony between us, my dear Monsieur the Cardinal," said Louis, kindly: "I am your pupil, and not the

king, you know very well, and this evening in particular, as I come to you as a petitioner, as a solicitor, and one very humble, and desirous to be kindly received too."

Mazarin, seeing the heightened color of the king, was confirmed in his first idea, — that is to say, that love thoughts were hidden under all these fine words. This time, political cunning, keen as it was, made a mistake; this color was not caused by the bashfulness of a juvenile passion, but only by the painful reaction of the royal pride.

Like a good uncle, Mazarin felt disposed to facilitate the confidence.

"Speak, Sire," said he; "and since your Majesty is willing for an instant to forget that I am your subject and call me your master and instructor, I promise your Majesty my most devoted and tender consideration."

"Thanks, Monsieur the Cardinal," answered the king; "that which I have to ask of your Eminence has but little to do with myself."

"So much the worse!" replied the cardinal; "so much the worse, Sire! I should wish your Majesty to ask of me something of importance, even a sacrifice; but whatever it may be that you ask me, I am ready to set your heart at rest by granting it, my dear Sire."

"Well, this is what brings me here," said the king, with a beating of the heart that had no equal except the beating of the heart of the minister: "I have just received a visit from my brother the King of England."

Mazarin bounded in his bed as if he had been brought in contact with a Leyden jar or a voltaic pile, at the same time that a surprise, or rather a manifest disappointment, inflamed his features with such a blaze of anger that Louis XIV., although so little of a diplomatist, saw that the minister had hoped to hear something else.

"Charles II.?" exclaimed Mazarin, with a hoarse voice and a disdainful movement of his lips. "You have received a visit from Charles II.?"

"From King Charles II.," replied Louis, according in a marked manner to the grandson of Henry IV. the title which Mazarin had forgotten to give him. "Yes, Monsieur the Cardinal, that unhappy prince has touched my heart with the relation of his misfortunes. His distress is great, Monsieur the Cardinal, and it has appeared painful to me, who have seen my own throne disputed, who have been forced in times of commotion to quit my capital, — to me, in short, who am acquainted with misfortune, — to leave a deposed and fugitive brother without assistance."

"Eh!" said the cardinal, sharply; "why had he not, as you have, a Jules Mazarin by his side? His crown would then have remained intact."

"I know all that my house owes to your Eminence," replied the king, haughtily, "and you may believe well that I, on my part, shall never forget it. It is precisely because my brother the King of England has not about him the powerful genius who has saved me, — it is for that, I say, that I wish to conciliate the aid of that same genius, and beg you to extend your arm over his head, well assured, Monsieur the Cardinal, that your hand, by touching him only, would know how to replace upon his brow the crown which fell at the foot of his father's scaffold."

"Sire," replied Mazarin, "I thank you for your good opinion with regard to myself, but we have nothing to do yonder; they are a set of madmen, who deny God, and cut off the heads of their kings. They are dangerous, observe, Sire, and filthy to the touch after having wallowed in royal blood and covenantal dirt. That policy has never suited me, — I scorn it and reject it."

"Therefore you ought to assist in establishing a better."

"What is that?"

"The restoration of Charles II., for example."

"Good heavens!" cried Mazarin, "does the poor prince flatter himself with that chimera?"

"Yes, he does," replied the young king, terrified at the difficulties of this project, which the infallible eye of his minister seemed to discover; "he only asks for a million to carry out his purpose."

"Is that all? — a little million, if you please!" said the cardinal ironically, emphasizing his Italian accent. "A little million, if you please, brother! Bah! a family of mendicants!"

"Cardinal," said Louis, raising his head, "that family of mendicants is a branch of my family."

"Are you rich enough to give millions to other people, Sire? Have you the millions?"

"Oh!" replied Louis XIV., with great pain, which he, however, by a strong effort prevented from appearing on his countenance, — "oh! yes, Monsieur the Cardinal, I am well aware I am poor; and yet the crown of France is worth a million, and to perform a good action, I would pledge my crown, if it were necessary. I could find Jews who would be willing to lend me a million."

"So, Sire, you say you want a million?" said Mazarin.

"Yes, Monsieur, I say so."

"You are mistaken, greatly mistaken, Sire; you want much more than that. — Bernouin! — You shall see, Sire, how much you really want."

"What, Cardinal!" said the king, "are you going to consult a lackey upon my affairs?"

"Bernouin!" cried the cardinal again, without appearing to remark the humiliation of the young prince

"Come here, Bernouin, and describe the account I made you go into just now."

"Cardinal, Cardinal! did you not hear me?" said Louis, becoming pale with anger.

'Do not be angry, Sire; I deal openly with the affairs of your Majesty. Every one in France knows that; my books are as open as day. What did I tell you to do just now, Bernouin?"

"Your Eminence commanded me to cast up an account."

"You did it, did you not?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"To verify the amount of which his Majesty, at this moment, stands in need. Did I not tell you so? Be frank, my friend."

"Your Eminence said so."

"Well, what sum did I say I wanted?"

"Forty-five millions, I think."

"And what sum could we find, after collecting all our resources?"

"Thirty-nine million two hundred and sixty thousand francs."

"That is correct, Bernouin; that is all I wanted to know. Leave us now," said the cardinal, fixing his brilliant eye upon the young king, who sat mute with stupefaction.

"But yet —" stammered the king.

"What, do you still doubt, Sire?" said the cardinal. "Well, here is a proof of what I said."

And Mazarin drew from under his bolster the paper covered with figures, which he presented to the king, who turned away his eyes, his vexation was so profound.

"Therefore, as it is a million you want, Sire, and that million is not set down here, it is forty-six millions your Majesty stands in need of. Well, I don't think that any

Jews in the world would lend such a sum, even upon the crown of France."

The king, clenching his hands beneath his ruffles, pushed away his chair.

"So it must be, then!" said he; "my brother the King of England will die of hunger."

"Sire," replied Mazarin, in the same tone, "remember this proverb, which I give you as the expression of the soundest policy: 'Rejoice at being poor when your neighbor is poor likewise.'"

Louis meditated for a few moments, with an inquisitive glance directed to the paper, one end of which remained under the bolster.

"Then," said he, "it is impossible to comply with my demand for money, Monsieur the Cardinal, is it?"

"Absolutely, Sire."

"Remember, this will secure me a future enemy, if he succeeds in regaining his crown without my assistance."

"If your Majesty only fears that, you may be quite at ease," replied Mazarin, eagerly.

"Very well, I say no more about it," exclaimed Louis XIV.

"Have I at least convinced you, Sire?" placing his hand upon that of the king.

"Perfectly."

"If there be anything else, ask it, Sire; I shall be most happy to grant it to you, having refused this."

"Anything else, Monsieur?"

"Why, yes; am I not, body and soul, devoted to your Majesty?— Ho, there! Bernouin!— lights and guards for his Majesty! His Majesty is returning to his own chamber."

"Not yet, Monsieur; since you place your good will at my disposal, I will take advantage of it."

"For yourself, Sire?" asked the cardinal, hoping that his niece was at length about to be named.

"No, Monsieur, not for myself," replied Louis, "but still for my brother Charles."

The brow of Mazarin again became clouded, and he grumbled a few words that the king could not catch.

CHAPTER XI.

MAZARIN'S POLICY.

INSTEAD of the hesitation with which he had accosted the cardinal a quarter of an hour before, there might be read in the eyes of the young king that will against which a struggle might be maintained, and which might be crushed by its own impotence, but which at least would preserve, like a wound in the depth of the heart, the remembrance of its defeat.

"This time, Monsieur the Cardinal, we have to do with a thing much more easy to be found than a million."

"Do you think so, Sire?" said Mazarin, looking at the king with that penetrating eye which was accustomed to read to the bottom of hearts.

"Yes, I think so; and when you know the object of my request —"

"And do you think I do not know it, Sire?"

"You know what remains for me to say to you?"

"Listen, Sire; these are King Charles's own words —"

"Oh, impossible!"

"Listen. 'And if that miser, that beggarly Italian,' said he —"

"Monsieur the Cardinal!"

"That is the sense, if not the words. Eh! Good heavens! I wish him no ill on that account; every one sees with his passions. He said to you: 'If that vile Italian refuses the million we ask of him, Sire, — if we are forced, for want of money, to renounce diplomacy,

well, then, we will ask him to grant us five hundred gentlemen.'"

The king started, for the cardinal was only mistaken in the number.

"Is not that it, Sire?" cried the minister, with a triumphant accent. "And then he added some fine words; he said: 'I have friends on the other side of the Channel, and these friends only want a leader and a banner. When they shall see me, when they shall behold the banner of France, they will rally round me, for they will comprehend that I have your support. The colors of the French uniform will be worth as much to me as the million M. de Mazarin will refuse us,' — for he was pretty well assured I should refuse him that million. — 'I shall conquer with these five hundred gentlemen, Sire, and all the honor will be yours.' Now, that is what he said, or to that purpose, was it not? — turning those plain words into brilliant metaphors and pompous images; for they are fine talkers, that family! The father talked, even on the scaffold."

The perspiration of shame stood upon the brow of Louis. He felt that it was inconsistent with his dignity to hear his brother thus insulted, but he did not yet know how to act with him before whom he had seen every one blench, even his mother. At last he made an effort.

"But," said he, "Monsieur the Cardinal, it is not five hundred men, it is only two hundred."

"Well, but you see I guessed what he wanted."

"I never denied, Monsieur, that you had a penetrating eye, and that was why I thought you would not refuse my brother Charles a thing so simple and so easy to grant him as what I ask of you in his name, Monsieur the Cardinal, or rather in my own."

"Sire," said Mazarin, "I have studied policy thirty years, — first with M. le Cardinal de Richelieu, and then alone. This policy has not always been over-honest, it must be allowed, but it has never been unskilful. Now, that which is proposed to your Majesty is dishonest and unskilful at the same time."

"Dishonest, Monsieur!"

"Sire, you entered into a treaty with Cromwell."

"Yes, and in that very treaty Cromwell signed his name above mine."

"Why did you sign yours so low down, Sire? Cromwell found a good place, and he took it; that was his custom. I return, then, to Cromwell. You have a treaty with him, — that is to say, with England, since when you signed that treaty Cromwell was England."

"Cromwell is dead."

"Do you think so, Sire?"

"No doubt he is, since his son Richard has succeeded him, and has abdicated."

"Yes, that is it exactly. Richard inherited on the death of his father, and England on the abdication of Richard. The treaty formed part of the inheritance, whether in the hands of Richard or in the hands of England. The treaty is, then, still as good, as valid, as ever. Why should you evade it, Sire? What is changed? Charles II. wants that to-day which we were not willing to grant him ten years ago; but that was foreseen and provided against. You are the ally of England, Sire, and not of Charles II. It was doubtless wrong, in a family point of view, to sign a treaty with a man who had cut off the head of the brother-in-law of the king your father, and to contract an alliance with a parliament which they call yonder the Rump Parliament; it was unbecoming, I acknowledge, but it was not unskilful in a political

point of view, since, thanks to that treaty, I saved your Majesty, then a minor, the trouble and danger of a foreign war, which the Fronde — you remember the Fronde, Sire?" — the young king hung down his head — "which the Fronde might have fatally complicated. And thus I prove to your Majesty, that to change our plan now, without warning our allies, would be at once unskilful and dishonest. We should make war with the aggression on our side; we should make it, deserving to have it made against us; and we should have the appearance of fearing it while provoking it, for a permission granted to five hundred men, to two hundred men, to fifty men, to ten men, is still a permission. One Frenchman, that is the nation; one uniform, that is the army. Suppose, Sire, for example, that, sooner or later, you should have war with Holland, which, sooner or later, will certainly happen; or with Spain, which will perhaps ensue if your marriage fails" (Mazarin stole a furtive glance at the king), — "and there are a thousand causes that might still make your marriage fail, — well, would you approve of England's sending to the United Provinces or to Spain a regiment, a company, a squadron even, of English gentlemen? Would you think that they kept within the limits of their treaty of alliance?"

Louis listened: it seemed so strange to him that Mazarin should invoke good faith, — he, the author of so many political tricks, called Mazarinades. "And yet," said the king, "without any manifest authorization, I cannot prevent gentlemen of my States from passing over into England, if such should be their good pleasure."

"You ought to compel them to return, Sire, or at least protest against their presence as enemies in a country allied with you."

"Well, but come, Monsieur the Cardinal, you who are

so profound a genius, try if you cannot find means to assist this poor king, without compromising ourselves."

"And that is exactly what I am not willing to do, my dear Sire," said Mazarin. "If England were to act exactly according to my wishes, she could not act better than she does; if I directed the policy of England from this place, I should not direct it otherwise. Governed as she is governed, England is an eternal nest of contention for all Europe. Holland protects Charles II., let Holland do so; they will become angry, they will fight. They are the only two maritime powers. Let them destroy each other's navy; we can construct ours with the wreck of their vessels, and shall save our money to buy nails with."

"Oh, how paltry and mean all that is you tell me, Monsieur the Cardinal!"

"Yes, but nevertheless it is true, Sire; you must confess that. There is this, still further. Suppose I admit for a moment the possibility of breaking your word and evading the treaty, — it does sometimes happen that one fails to keep his word or breaks an agreement; but that is when some great interest is at stake, or when the contract is found to be too troublesome, — well, you will authorize the engagement asked of you: France — her banner, which is the same thing — will cross the Straits and will fight; France will be conquered."

"Why so?"

"By my faith! there is a pretty general for us to fight under, — this Charles II.! Worcester gives us good proofs of that."

"But he will no longer have to deal with Cromwell, Monsieur."

"But he will have to deal with Monk, who is quite as dangerous. The brave brewer of whom we are speaking,

was a visionary; he had moments of exaltation, expansion, inflation, during which he opened like a too full cask; and from the chinks there always escaped some drops of his thoughts, and by the sample the whole of his thought was to be made out. Cromwell has thus allowed us more than ten times to penetrate into his very soul, when one would have conceived that soul to be enveloped in triple brass, as Horace has it. But Monk! — Oh, Sire, God defend you from ever having anything political to transact with Monk! It is he who has given me, in one year, all the gray hairs I have. Monk is no fanatic; unfortunately he is a politician; he does not split, he keeps close together. For ten years he has had his eyes fixed upon one object, and nobody has yet been able to ascertain what. Every morning, as Louis XI. advised, he burns his night-cap. Therefore, on the day when this plan, slowly and solitarily ripened, shall break forth, it will break forth with all the conditions of the success which always accompany an unforeseen event.

"That is Monk, Sire, of whom, perhaps, you have never heard, — of whom, perhaps, you did not know the name even, before your brother Charles II., who knows what he is, pronounced it before you. He is a wonder of depth and tenacity, the two things alone against which intelligence and ardor are blunted. Sire, I had ardor when I was young; I always had intelligence. I may safely boast of it, because I am reproached with it. I have done very well with these two qualities, since, from the son of a fisherman of Piscina, I have become first minister of the King of France; and in that quality your Majesty will perhaps acknowledge I have rendered some services to the throne of your Majesty.' Well, Sire, if I had met with Monk on my way, instead of M. de Beaufort, M. de Retz, or Monsieur the Prince, — well, we should

have been ruined. If you engage yourself rashly, Sire, you will fall into the talons of this politic soldier. The casque of Monk, Sire, is an iron coffer, in the recesses of which he shuts up his thoughts, and no one has the key of it. Therefore, near him, or rather before him, I bow, Sire, for I have nothing but a velvet cap."

"What do you think Monk wishes to do, then?"

"Eh! Sire, if I knew that, I would not tell you to mistrust him, for I should be stronger than he; but with him I am afraid to guess — to guess! — you understand my word? — for if I thought I had guessed, I should stop at an idea, and, in spite of myself, should pursue that idea. Since that man has been in power yonder, I am like those damned souls in Dante, whose necks Satan has twisted, and who walk forward, looking behind them. I am travelling towards Madrid, but I never lose sight of London. To guess, with that devil of a man, is to deceive one's self, and to deceive one's self is to ruin one's self. God keep me from ever seeking to guess what he aims at; I confine myself to watching what he does, and that is quite enough. Now I believe — you observe the extent of the word *I believe?* — *I believe*, with respect to Monk, ties one to nothing — I believe that he has a strong inclination to succeed Cromwell. Your Charles II. has already caused proposals to be made to him by ten persons; he has satisfied himself with driving these ten meddlers from his presence, without saying anything to them but, 'Begone, or I will have you hung.' That man is a sepulchre! At this moment Monk is affecting devotion to the Rump Parliament; of this devotion, observe, I am not the dupe. Monk has no wish to be assassinated, — an assassination would stop him in the midst of his operations; and his work must be accomplished; — so I believe — but do not you believe what I believe, Sire: for

I say I believe from habit — I believe that Monk is keeping well with the Parliament till the day comes for his dispersing it. You are asked for swords, but they are to fight against Monk. God preserve us from fighting against Monk, Sire; for Monk would beat us, and I should never console myself after being beaten by Monk. I should say to myself, Monk has foreseen that victory ten years. For God's sake, Sire, out of friendship for you, if not out of consideration for himself, let Charles II. keep quiet. Your Majesty will make him a little revenue here; you will give him one of your châteaux. Yes, yes — wait awhile. But I forgot the treaty, — that famous treaty of which we were just now speaking. Your Majesty has not even the right to give him a château."

"How is that?"

"Yes, yes; your Majesty is bound not to afford hospitality to King Charles, and to compel him to leave France even. It was on this account we forced him to quit it; and yet here he is returned again. Sire, I hope you will give your brother to understand that he cannot remain with us; that it is impossible; that he compromises us, — or I myself — "

"Enough, Monsieur," said Louis XIV., rising. "To refuse me a million, perhaps you have the right; your millions are your own. To refuse me two hundred gentlemen, you have still the right; for you are first minister, and you have, in the eyes of France, the responsibility of peace and war. But that you should pretend to prevent me, who am king, from affording hospitality to the grandson of Henry IV., to my cousin-german, to the companion of my childhood, — there your power stops, and there commences my will."

"Sire," said Mazarin, who was delighted at being let off so cheaply, and who had, besides, only fought so

earnestly to arrive at that, — "Sire, I will always bend before the will of my king. Let my king, then, keep near him, or in one of his châteaux, the King of England; let Mazarin know it, but let not the minister know it."

"Good-night, Monsieur," said Louis XIV.; "I go away in despair."

"But convinced; and that is all I desire, Sire," replied Mazarin.

The king made no answer, and retired quite pensive, convinced, not of all Mazarin had told him, but of one thing which he took care not to mention to him; and that was that it was necessary for him to study seriously both his own affairs and those of Europe, for he found them very difficult and very obscure. Louis found the King of England seated in the same place where he had left him. On perceiving him, the English prince arose; but at the first glance he saw discouragement in dark letters upon his cousin's brow. Then, speaking first, as if to facilitate the painful avowal that Louis had to make to him, —

"Whatever may it be," said he, "I shall never forget all the kindness, all the friendship, you have exhibited towards me."

"Alas!" replied Louis, in a melancholy tone, "only sterile good-will, my brother."

Charles II. became extremely pale; he passed his cold hand over his brow, and struggled for a few instants against a faintness that made him tremble. "I understand," said he at last; "no more hope!"

Louis seized the hand of Charles II. "Wait, my brother," said he; "precipitate nothing; everything may change; it is extreme resolutions that ruin causes; add another year of trial, I implore you, to the years you have already undergone. You have, to induce you to act now rather than at another time, neither occasion nor oppor-

tunity. Come with me, my brother; I will give you one of my residences, whichever you prefer, to inhabit. I, with you, will keep my eye upon events; we will prepare. Come, then, my brother, have courage!"

Charles II. withdrew his hand from that of the king, and drawing back, to salute him with more ceremony, replied, "Thanks, Sire, with all my heart! But I have prayed without success to the greatest king on earth; now I will go and ask a miracle of God." And he went out without being willing to hear any more, his head carried loftily, his hand trembling, with a painful contraction of his noble countenance, and that profound gloom which, finding no more hope in the world of men, appeared to go beyond it, and ask it in worlds unknown.

The officer of Musketeers, on seeing him pass by thus pale, bowed almost to his knees as he saluted him. He then took a flambeau, called two musketeers, and descended the deserted staircase with the unfortunate king, holding in his left hand his hat, the plume of which swept the steps. Arrived at the door, the officer asked the king which way he was going, that he might direct the musketeers.

"Monsieur," replied Charles II., in a subdued voice, "you who have known my father, say, did you ever pray for him? If you have done so, do not forget me in your prayers. Now, I am going alone, and beg of you not to accompany me, or have me accompanied further."

The officer bowed, and sent away the musketeers into the interior of the palace. But he himself remained an instant under the porch to watch the departure of Charles II., till he was lost in the shadows of the winding street. "To him, as to his father formerly," murmured he, "Athos, if he were here, would say with reason, 'Salutation to fallen majesty!'" Then reascending the stair-

case: "Oh the vile service that I follow!" said he, at every step. "Oh, my pitiful master! Life thus spent is no longer tolerable, and it is at length time that I do something! No more generosity, no more energy! The master has succeeded, the pupil is starved forever. *Mordioux!* I will not resist. Come, you men," continued he, entering the antechamber, "why are you all looking at me so? Extinguish these flambeaux, and return to your posts. Ah! you were guarding me? Yes, you watch over me, do you not, worthy fellows? Brave fools! I am not the Duc de Guise. Begone! They will not assassinate me in the little passage-way. Besides," added he, in a low voice, "that would be a resolution, and no resolutions have been formed since M. le Cardinal de Richelieu died. Now, with all his faults, that was a man! It is decided: to-morrow I will throw my uniform to the nettles"

Then, reflecting, "No," said he, "not yet! I have one great trial to make, and I will make it; but that — and I swear it — shall be the last, *mordioux!*"

He had not finished speaking, when a voice issued from the king's chamber. "Monsieur the Lieutenant!" said this voice.

"I am here," replied he.

"The king desires to speak to you."

"Humph!" said the lieutenant; "perhaps it is for what I was thinking about;" and he went into the king's appartement.

CHAPTER XII.

THE KING AND THE LIEUTENANT.

As soon as the king saw the officer enter, he dismissed his *valet de chambre* and his gentleman. "Who is on duty to-morrow, Monsieur?" asked he.

The lieutenant bowed his head with military politeness, and replied, "I am, Sire."

"How! you still?"

"I always, Sire."

"How can that be, Monsieur?"

"Sire, when travelling, the Musketeers supply all the posts of your Majesty's household; that is to say, yours, her Majesty the Queen's, and Monsieur the Cardinal's, the latter of whom borrows of the king the best part, or rather the most numerous part, of the royal guard."

"But in the interims?"

"There are no interims, Sire, but for twenty or thirty men who rest out of a hundred and twenty. At the Louvre it is very different, and if I were at the Louvre, I should rest upon my brigadier; but when travelling, Sire, no one knows what may happen, and I prefer doing my duty myself."

"Then you are on guard every day?"

"And every night. Yes, Sire."

"Monsieur, I cannot allow that, — I will have you rest."

"That is very kind, Sire; but I will not."

"What do you say?" said the king, who did not at first comprehend the full meaning of this reply.

"I say, Sire, that I will not expose myself to the chance of a fault. If the devil had an ill turn to play me, you understand, Sire, as he knows the man with whom he has to deal, he would choose the moment when I should not be there. My duty and the peace of my conscience before everything, Sire."

"But such duty will kill you, Monsieur."

"Eh! Sire, I have performed it thirty-five years, and in all France and Navarre there is not a man in better health than I am. Moreover, I entreat you, Sire, not to trouble yourself about me. That would appear very strange to me, seeing that I am not accustomed to it."

The king cut short the conversation by a fresh question. "Shall you be here, then, to-morrow morning?"

"As at present? Yes, Sire."

The king walked several times up and down his chamber; it was very plain that he burned with a desire to speak, but that he was restrained by some fear or other. The lieutenant, standing motionless, hat in hand, leaning on his hip, watched him making these evolutions, and while looking at him, grumbled to himself, biting his mustache: "For a demi-pistole, he has not resolution enough! *Parole d'honneur!* I would lay a wager he does not speak at all!"

The king continued to walk about, casting from time to time a side glance at the lieutenant. "He is his father over again," continued the latter, in his secret monologue; "he is at once proud, avaricious, and timid. The devil take his master, say I."

The king stopped. "Lieutenant," said he.

"I am here, Sire."

"Why did you cry out this evening, down below in the salons, 'On the king's service! His Majesty's Musketeers!'"

"Because you gave me the order, Sire."

"I?"

"Yourself."

"Indeed, I did not say a word, Monsieur."

"Sire, an order is given by a sign, by a gesture, by a glance, as intelligibly, as freely, and as clearly as by word of mouth. A servant who has nothing but ears is only half a good servant."

"Your eyes are very penetrating, then, Monsieur."

"How is that, Sire?"

"Because they see what is not."

"My eyes are good, though, Sire, although they have served their master long and much; when they have anything to see, they seldom miss the opportunity. Now, this evening, they saw that your Majesty colored with endeavoring to conceal your inclination to gape, that your Majesty looked with eloquent supplications, first at his Eminence, and then at her Majesty the Queen-mother, and at length to the door of entrance; and they so thoroughly remarked all I have said, that they saw your Majesty's lips articulate these words: 'Who will get me out of this?'"

"Monsieur!"

"Or something to this effect, Sire: 'My Musketeers!' I could then no longer hesitate. That look was for me; the order was for me. I cried out instantly, 'His Majesty's Musketeers!' And, besides, that is proved to be true, Sire, not only by your Majesty's not saying I was wrong, but proving I was right by going out at once."

The king turned away to smile; then, after a few

seconds, he again fixed his limpid eye upon that countenance, — so intelligent, so bold, and so firm that it might have been said to be the proud and energetic profile of the eagle in face of the sun. "That is all very well," said he, after a short silence, during which he endeavored, in vain, to look his officer down.

But, seeing the king said no more, the latter pirouetted on his heels, and made three steps towards the door, muttering, "He will not speak! *Mordioux!* he will not speak!"

"Thank you, Monsieur," said the king at last.

"Humph!" continued the lieutenant; "there only wanted that, — to be blamed for having been less of a fool than another might have been." And he gained the door, allowing his spurs to jingle in true military style. But when he was upon the threshold, feeling that the king's desire drew him back, he returned.

"Has your Majesty told me all?" asked he, in a tone we cannot describe, but which, without appearing to solicit the royal confidence, contained so much persuasive frankness that the king immediately replied, —

"Yes; but draw near, Monsieur."

"Now, then," murmured the officer, "he is coming to it at last."

"Listen to me."

"I will not lose a word, Sire."

"You will mount on horseback to-morrow, at about half-past four in the morning, and you will have a horse saddled for me."

"From your Majesty's stables?"

"No; one of your Musketeers' horses."

"Very well, Sire. Is that all?"

"And you will accompany me."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Shall I come to seek your Majesty, or shall I wait?"

"You will wait for me."

"Where, Sire?"

"At the little park-gate."

The lieutenant bowed, understanding that the king had told him all he had to say. In fact, the king dismissed him with a gracious wave of the hand. The officer left the chamber of the king, and returned to place himself philosophically in his *fauteuil*, where, far from sleeping, as might have been expected, considering how late it was, he began to reflect more profoundly than he had ever reflected before. The result of these reflections was not so melancholy as the preceding ones had been.

"Come, he has begun," said he. "Love urges him on, and he goes forward, — he goes forward! The king is nobody in his own palace; but the man perhaps may prove to be worth something. Well, we shall see to-morrow morning. Oh! oh!" cried he, all at once starting up, "that is a gigantic idea, *mordioux!* and perhaps my fortune depends, at least, upon that idea!" After this exclamation, the officer arose and marched, with his hands in his coat-pockets, about the immense antechamber that served him as an apartment. The wax-light flamed furiously under the stirring of a fresh breeze which stole in through the chinks of the door and the window, and cut the hall diagonally. It threw out a reddish, unequal light, sometimes brilliant, sometimes dull; and the tall shadow of the lieutenant was seen marching on the wall, in profile, like a figure by Callot, with his long sword and feathered hat.

"Surely," said he, "I am mistaken if Mazarin is not laying a snare for this amorous boy. Mazarin, this

evening, gave an address, and made an appointment as complacently as M. Dangeau himself could have done, — I heard him, and I know the meaning of his words. 'To-morrow morning,' said he, 'they will pass opposite the bridge of Blois.' *Mordioux!* that is clear enough, and particularly for a lover. That is the cause of this embarrassment; that is the cause of this hesitation; that is the cause of this order, — 'Monsieur the Lieutenant of my Musketeers, be on horseback to-morrow at four o'clock in the morning;' which is as clear as if he had said, 'Monsieur the Lieutenant of my Musketeers, to-morrow, at four, at the bridge of Blois, — do you understand?' Here is a State secret, then, which I, humble as I am, have in my possession while it is in action. And how do I get it? Because I have good eyes, as his Majesty just now said. They say he loves this little Italian doll furiously. They say he threw himself at his mother's feet, to ask her to allow him to marry her. They say the queen went so far as to consult the court of Rome, whether such a marriage, contracted against her will, would be valid. Oh, if I were but twenty-five! If I had by my side those I no longer have! If I did not despise the whole world most profoundly, I would embroil Mazarin with the queen-mother, France with Spain, and I would make a queen after my own fashion. But let that pass;" and the lieutenant snapped his fingers in disdain.

"This miserable Italian, this poor creature, this sordid wretch, who has just refused the King of England a million, would not perhaps give me a thousand pistoles for the news I could carry him. *Mordioux!* I am falling into second childhood, — I am becoming stupid indeed! The idea of Mazarin giving anything! ha! ha! ha!" and he laughed hilariously, though he was alone.

"Well, let us go to sleep, — let us go to sleep; and the sooner the better. My mind is fatigued with my evening's work, and will see things to-morrow more clearly than to-day."

And upon this recommendation, made to himself, he folded his cloak around him, thinking with contempt of his royal neighbor. Five minutes after this he was asleep, with his hands clenched and his lips apart, allowing to escape, not his secret, but a sonorous sound, which rose and spread freely beneath the majestic roof of the antechamber.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARIE DE MANCINI.

The sun had scarcely lighted the majestic trees of the park and the lofty turrets of the castle with its first beams, when the young king, who had been awake more than two hours, possessed by the sleeplessness of love, opened his shutters himself, and cast an inquiring look into the courts of the sleeping palace. He saw that it was the hour agreed upon; the great court clock pointed to a quarter-past four. He did not disturb his *valet de chambre*, who was sleeping profoundly at some distance; he dressed himself, and the valet, in a great fright, sprang up, thinking he had been deficient in his duty; but the king sent him back again, commanding him to preserve the most absolute silence. He then descended the little staircase, went out at a side-door, and perceived at the end of the wall a mounted horseman, holding another horse by the bridle. This horseman was not to be recognized in his cloak and slouched hat. As to the horse, saddled like that of a rich citizen, it had nothing remarkable about it to the most experienced eye. Louis took the bridle; the officer held the stirrup without dismounting, and asked his Majesty's orders in a low voice.

"Follow me," replied the king.

The officer put his horse to the trot, behind that of his master, and they descended the hill towards the bridge. When arrived at the other side of the Loire, "Monsieur," said the king, "you will please to ride on till you see a

carriage coming; then return and inform me. I will wait here."

"Will your Majesty deign to give me some description of the carriage I am charged to discover?"

"A carriage in which you will see two ladies, and probably their attendants likewise."

"Sire, I should not wish to make a mistake; is there no other sign by which I may know this carriage?"

"It will bear, in all probability, the arms of Monsieur the Cardinal."

"That is sufficient, Sire," replied the officer, fully instructed in the object of his search. He put his horse to the trot, and rode sharply on in the direction pointed out by the king. But he had scarcely gone five hundred paces when he saw four mules, and then a carriage, loom up from behind a little hill. Behind this carriage came another. It required only one glance to assure him that these were the equipages he was in search of; he therefore turned his horse, and rode back to the king.

"Sire," said he, "here are the carriages. The first, as you said, contains two ladies with their *femmes de chambre;* the second contains the footmen, provisions, and necessaries."

"That is well," replied the king, in an agitated voice. "Please to go and tell those ladies that a cavalier of the court wishes to pay his respects to them alone."

The officer set off at a gallop. "*Mordioux!*" said he, as he rode on, "here is a new and honorable employment, I hope! I complained of being nobody. I am the king's confidant, — that is enough to make a musketeer burst with pride."

He approached the carriage, and delivered his message gallantly and intelligently. There were two ladies in the carriage, — one of great beauty, although rather thin;

the other less favored by nature, but lively, graceful, and uniting in the light folds of her brow all the signs of a strong will. Her eyes, in particular, animated and piercing, were more eloquent in expression than all the amorous phrases in fashion in those days of gallantry. It was to her D'Artagnan addressed himself, without fear of being mistaken, — although the other was, as we have said, the more handsome of the two.

"Madame," said he, "I am the lieutenant of the Musketeers, and there is on the road a cavalier who awaits you, and is desirous of paying his respects to you."

At these words, the effect of which he watched closely, the lady with the black eyes uttered a cry of joy, leaned out of the carriage window, and seeing the cavalier approach, held out her arms, exclaiming, "Ah, my dear sire!" and the tears gushed from her eyes.

The coachman stopped his team. The women rose in confusion from the carriage; and the second lady made a slight reverence, terminated by the most ironical smile that jealousy ever imparted to the lips of woman.

"Marie, dear Marie!" cried the king, taking the hand of the black-eyed lady in both his. And opening the heavy door himself, he drew her out of the carriage with so much ardor that she was in his arms before she touched the ground. The lieutenant, posted on the other side of the carriage, saw and heard all without being observed.

The king offered his arm to Mademoiselle de Mancini, and made a sign to the coachman and lackeys to proceed. It was nearly six o'clock; the road was fresh and pleasant; tall trees, with the foliage still enclosed in the golden down of their buds, let the dew of morning filter from their trembling branches, like liquid diamonds; the grass was bursting at the foot of the hedges; the swal-

lows, only a few days returned, described their graceful curves between the heavens and the water; a breeze, perfumed by the blossoming woods, sighed along the road, and wrinkled the surface of the waters of the river. All these beauties of the day, all these perfumes of the plants, all these aspirations of the earth towards the heavens, intoxicated the two lovers, who, walking side by side, leaning upon each other, eyes fixed upon eyes, hand clasped within hand, went slowly by a mutual inclination, and did not venture to speak, they had so much to say.

The officer saw that the king's horse pulled this way and that, and inconvenienced Mademoiselle de Mancini. On the pretext of taking the horse, he drew near to them, dismounted, and walking between the two horses he led, did not lose a single word or gesture of the lovers. It was Mademoiselle de Mancini who at length began.

"Ah, my dear sire!" said she, "you do not abandon me, then?"

"No," replied the king; "you see I do not, Marie."

"I had been so often told, though, that as soon as we should be separated you would no longer think of me."

"Dear Marie, is it then to-day only that you have discovered we are surrounded by people interested in deceiving us?"

"But then, Sire, this journey, this alliance with Spain? They are going to marry you!"

Louis hung his head. At the same time the officer could see in the sunlight the eyes of Marie de Mancini shine with the brilliancy of a poniard starting from its sheath. "And you have done nothing in favor of our love?" asked the girl, after a silence of a moment.

"Ah! Mademoiselle, how could you believe that? I threw myself at the feet of my mother; I begged her, I

implored her; I told her all my hopes of happiness were in you; I even threatened — "

"Well?" asked Marie, eagerly.

"Well, the queen-mother wrote to the court of Rome, and received as answer, that a marriage between us would have no validity, and would be dissolved by the holy father. At length, finding there was no hope for us, I requested to have my marriage with the infanta at least delayed."

"And yet that does not prevent your being on the road to meet her?"

"What would you have? To my prayers, to my supplications, to my tears, I received no answer but reasons of State."

"Well, well?"

"Well, what is to be done, Mademoiselle, when so many wills are leagued against me?"

It was now Marie's turn to hang her head. "Then I must bid you adieu forever," said she. "You know that they banish me; you know that they bury me; you know that they go still further, — you know that they are marrying me also, — me!"

Louis became very pale, and placed his hand upon his heart.

"If I had thought that my life only had been at stake, I have been so persecuted that I might have yielded; but I thought yours was concerned, my dear sire, and I stood out for the sake of preserving your happiness."

"Oh yes! my happiness, my treasure!" murmured the king, more gallantly than passionately perhaps.

"The cardinal might have yielded," said Marie, "if you had addressed yourself to him, if you had pressed him. For the cardinal to call the King of France his nephew! — do you not perceive, Sire? He would have made war

even for that honor; the cardinal assured of governing alone, under the double pretext of having brought up the king, and given his niece to him in marriage, — the cardinal would have combated all wills, overcome all obstacles. Oh, Sire! I can answer for that. I am a woman, and I see clearly into everything where love is concerned."

These words produced a strange effect upon the king. Instead of heightening his passion, they cooled it. He stopped, and said with precipitation: "What is to be said, Mademoiselle? Everything has failed."

"Except your will, I trust, my dear sire?"

"Alas!" said the king, coloring, "have I a will?"

"Oh!" Mademoiselle de Mancini murmured mournfully, wounded by that expression.

"The king has no will but that which policy dictates, but that which reasons of State impose upon him."

"Oh! it is because you have no love," cried Marie; "if you loved, Sire, you would have a will."

On pronouncing these words, Marie raised her eyes to her lover, whom she saw more pale and more cast down than an exile who is about to quit his native land forever. "Accuse me," murmured the king, "but do not say I do not love you."

A long silence followed these words, which the young king had pronounced with a perfectly true and profound feeling.

"I am unable to think, Sire," continued Marie, "that to-morrow, and after to-morrow, I shall see you no more; I cannot think that I am going to end my sad days at a distance from Paris; that the lips of an old man, of an unknown, should touch that hand which you hold within yours, — no, in truth, I cannot think of all that, my dear sire, without my poor heart bursting with despair."

And Marie de Mancini did shed floods of tears. On

his part, the king, affected, carried his handkerchief to his mouth, and stifled a sob.

"See," said she, "the carriages have stopped, my sister waits for me, the time has come; what you are about to decide upon will be decided for life. Oh, Sire! you are willing, then, that I should lose you? You are willing, then, Louis, that she to whom you have said 'I love you' should belong to another man than her king, her master, her lover? Oh! courage, Louis! courage! One word, a single word! Say 'I will!' and all my life is enchained to yours, and all my heart is yours forever."

The king made no reply. Marie then looked at him as Dido looked at Æneas in the Elysian fields, fiercely and disdainfully. "Adieu, then," said she; "adieu life! adieu love! adieu heaven!"

And she made a step to depart. The king detained her, seized her hand, which he glued to his lips, and, despair prevailing over the resolution he appeared to have inwardly formed, he let fall upon that beautiful hand a burning tear of regret, which made Marie start, so really had that tear burned her. She saw the humid eyes of the king, his pale brow, his convulsed lips, and cried with an accent that cannot be described: "Oh, Sire! you are a king, you weep, and I depart!"

As his sole reply, the king concealed his face in his handkerchief. The officer here uttered something so like a roar that it frightened the horses. Mademoiselle de Mancini, quite indignant, quitted the king's arm, got precipitately into the carriage, crying to the coachman, "Go on, go on quickly!"

The coachman obeyed, flogged his mules, and the heavy carriage rocked upon its creaking axle; while the King of France, alone, cast down, annihilated, did not dare to look either behind or before him.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH THE KING AND THE LIEUTENANT EACH GIVE PROOFS OF MEMORY.

When the king, like all the people in the world who are in love, had long and attentively watched the disappearance in the horizon of the carriage which bore away his mistress; when he had turned and turned again a hundred times to the same way, and had at length succeeded in calming in a degree the agitation of his heart and thoughts, he recollected that he was not alone. The officer still held the horse by the bridle, and had not lost all hope of seeing the king recover his resolution. He had still the resource of mounting, and riding after the carriage; they would have lost nothing by waiting a little. But the imagination of the lieutenant was too rich and too brilliant; it left far behind it that of the king, who took care not to allow himself to be carried away by any such luxurious excess. He contented himself with approaching the officer, and in a doleful voice, "Come," said he, "all is ended. To horse!"

The officer imitated this carriage, this slowness, this sadness, and leisurely mounted his horse. The king pushed on sharply; the lieutenant followed him. At the bridge Louis turned round for the last time. The lieutenant, patient as a god who has eternity behind and before him, still hoped for a return of energy, — but in vain; nothing happened. Louis gained the street which led to the castle, and entered as seven was striking.

When the king had returned, and the musketeer, who saw everything, had seen a corner of the tapestry rise at the window of the cardinal, he breathed a profound sigh, like a man unloosed from the tightest bonds, and said in a low voice: "Now then, my officer, I hope that it is over."

The king summoned his gentleman. "Please to understand I shall receive nobody before two o'clock," said he.

"Sire," replied the gentleman, "there is, however, some one who requests admittance."

"Who is that?"

"Your lieutenant of Musketeers."

"He who accompanied me?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Ah!" said the king, "let him come in."

The officer entered. The king made a sign, and the gentleman and the valet retired. Louis followed them with his eyes until they had shut the door, and when the tapestries had fallen behind them, — "You remind me by your presence, Monsieur, of something I had forgotten to recommend to you, — that is to say, the most absolute discretion."

"Oh! Sire, why does your Majesty give yourself the trouble of making me such a recommendation? It is plain you do not know me."

"Yes, Monsieur, that is true. I know that you are discreet; but as I had prescribed nothing —"

The officer bowed. "Has your Majesty nothing else to say to me?"

"No, Monsieur; you may retire."

"Shall I obtain permission not to do so till I have spoken to the king, Sire?"

"What have you to say to me? Explain yourself, Monsieur."

"Sire, a thing without importance to you, but which interests me greatly. Pardon me, then, for speaking of it. Without urgency, without necessity, I never would have done it, and I would have disappeared, mute and insignificant as I always have been."

"How! Disappeared! I do not understand you, Monsieur."

"Sire, in a word," said the officer, "I have come to ask for my discharge from your Majesty's service."

The king made a movement of surprise, but the officer remained as motionless as a statue.

"Your discharge — yours, Monsieur? and for how long a time, I pray?"

"Why, forever, Sire."

"What! you would quit my service, Monsieur?" said Louis, with an expression that revealed something more than surprise.

"Sire, I have that regret."

"Impossible!"

"It is so, however, Sire. I am getting old; I have worn harness now thirty-four or thirty-five years; my poor shoulders are tired; I feel that I must give place to the young. I don't belong to this age; I have still one foot in the old one; and in consequence everything is strange in my eyes, everything astonishes and bewilders me. In short, I have the honor to ask your Majesty for my discharge."

"Monsieur," said the king, looking at the officer, who wore his uniform with an ease that would have awakened envy in a young man, "you are stronger and more vigorous than I am."

"Oh!" replied the officer, with an air of assumed modesty, "your Majesty says so because I still have a good eye and a tolerably firm foot, because I can still ride a horse,

and my mustache is black; but, Sire, vanity of vanities all that, illusions all that, — appearance, smoke, Sire! I have still a young air, it is true, but I am old at bottom; and within six months I feel certain I shall be broken down, gouty, impotent. Therefore, Sire — "

"Monsieur," interrupted the king, "remember your words of yesterday. You said to me, in that very place where you now are, that you were endowed with better health than any other man in France, that fatigue was unknown to you; that you cared not for passing whole days and nights at your post. Did you tell me that, Monsieur, or not? Exercise your memory, Monsieur."

The officer breathed a sigh. "Sire," said he, "old age is boastful; and it is pardonable for old men to sound their own praises when others no longer praise them. It is very possible I said that; but the fact is, Sire, I am very much fatigued, and request permission to retire."

"Monsieur," said the king, advancing towards the officer with a gesture at once full of address and majesty, "you are not assigning me the true reason. You wish to quit my service, it may be true, but you disguise from me the motive for your retreat."

"Sire, believe that — "

"I believe what I see, Monsieur; I see a vigorous, energetic man, full of presence of mind, the best soldier in France perhaps; and this person cannot persuade me the least in the world that he stands in need of rest."

"Ah, Sire," said the lieutenant, with bitterness, "what praises! Indeed, your Majesty confounds me! Energetic, vigorous, brave, intelligent, the best soldier in the army! But, Sire, your Majesty exaggerates my small portion of merit to such a point that, however good an opinion I may have of myself, in very truth I no longer recognize myself. If I were vain enough to believe only

half of your Majesty's words, I should consider myself a valuable, indispensable man. I should say that a servant possessed of such brilliant qualities was a treasure beyond all price. Now, Sire, I have been all my life, — I feel bound to say it, — except at the present time, appreciated, in my opinion, much beneath my value. I therefore repeat, your Majesty exaggerates."

The king knitted his brow, for he saw a bitter raillery beneath the words of the officer. "Come, Monsieur," said he, "let us meet the question frankly. Tell me, are you dissatisfied with my service? No evasions; speak boldly, frankly, — I demand it."

The officer, who had been twisting his hat in his hands with an embarrassed air for several minutes, raised his head at these words. "Oh, Sire," said he, "that puts me a little more at my ease. To a question put so frankly, I will reply frankly. To tell the truth is a good thing, — as much from the pleasure one feels in relieving one's heart, as on account of its rarity. I will speak the truth, then, to my king, at the same time imploring him to excuse the frankness of an old soldier."

Louis looked at his officer with anxious inquietude, which was manifested by the agitation of his gesture. "Well, then, speak," said he, "for I am impatient to hear the truths you have to tell me."

The officer threw his hat upon a table, and his countenance, always so intelligent and martial, assumed all at once a strange character of grandeur and solemnity. "Sire," said he, "I quit the king's service because I am dissatisfied. The valet, in these times, can approach his master as respectfully as I do, can give him an account of his labor, bring back his tools, render the funds that have been intrusted to him, and say, 'Master, my day's work is done; pay me, if you please, and let us part.'"

"Monsieur! Monsieur!" exclaimed the king, purple with rage.

"Ah, Sire," replied the officer, bending his knee for a moment, "never was servant more respectful than I am before your Majesty; only you commanded me to tell the truth. Now I have begun to tell it, it must come out, even if you command me to hold my tongue."

There was so much resolution expressed in the deep-sunk muscles of the officer's countenance that Louis XIV. had no occasion to tell him to continue; he continued, then, while the king looked at him with a curiosity mingled with admiration: —

"Sire, I have, as I have said, now served the house of France thirty-five years; few people have worn out so many swords in that service as I have, and the swords I speak of were good swords too, Sire. I was a boy, ignorant of everything except courage, when the king your father divined that there was a man in me. I was a man, Sire, when the Cardinal de Richelieu, who was a judge of manhood, divined an enemy in me. Sire, the history of that enmity between the ant and the lion may be read, from the first to the last line, in the secret archives of your family. If ever you feel an inclination to view it, do it, Sire; the history is worth the trouble, — it is I who tell you so. You will there read that the lion, fatigued, harassed, out of breath, at length cried for quarter; and the justice must be rendered him to say that he gave as much as he required. Oh! those were glorious times, Sire, strewed over with battles like one of Tasso's or Ariosto's epics! The wonders of those times, to which the people of ours would refuse belief, were every-day occurrences. For five years together I was a hero every day, — at least, so I was told by personages of merit, — and that is a long period for heroism, trust me,

Sire, a period of five years. Nevertheless, I have faith in what these people told me, for they were good judges. They were named M. de Richelieu, M. de Buckingham, M. de Beaufort, M. de Retz, — a rough genius himself in street warfare, — in short, the king Louis XIII., and even the queen, your august mother, who one day condescended to say, '*Thank you.*' I don't know what service I had had the good fortune to render her. Pardon me, Sire, for speaking so boldly; but what I relate to you, as I have already had the honor to tell your Majesty, is history."

The king bit his lips, and threw himself violently into his *fauteuil.*

"I appear importunate to your Majesty," said the lieutenant. "Eh! Sire, that is the fate of truth; she is a stern companion; she bristles all over with steel; she wounds those she attacks, and sometimes him who delivers her."

"No, Monsieur," replied the king; "I bade you speak, — speak then."

"After the service of the king and the cardinal, came the service of the regency, Sire; I fought pretty well in the Fronde, — much less, though, than the first time. The men began to diminish in stature. I have, nevertheless, led your Majesty's Musketeers on some perilous occasions, which stand upon the orders of the day of the company. Mine was a beautiful lot then! I was the favorite of M. de Mazarin. Lieutenant here! lieutenant there! lieutenant to the right! lieutenant to the left! There was not a buffet dealt in France, of which your humble servant was not charged with the dealing. But they soon became not contented with France; Monsieur the Cardinal, he sent me to England on Cromwell's account, — another gentleman who was not over gentle, I assure you, Sire. I had

the honor to know him, and I was well able to appreciate him. A great deal was promised me on account of that mission. So, as I did in it quite contrary to all I had been bidden to do, I was generously paid, for I was at length appointed captain of the Musketeers; that is to say, to the post most envied at court, which gives precedence before the marshals of France, — and with justice; for when one mentions the captain of the Musketeers he speaks of the flower of the soldiers and the king of the brave."

"Captain, Monsieur!" interrupted the king; "you make a mistake. Lieutenant, you mean to say."

"Not at all, Sire, — I make no mistake; your Majesty may rely upon me in that respect. Monsieur the Cardinal gave me the commission himself."

"Well!"

"But M. de Mazarin, as you know better than anybody, does not often give, and sometimes takes back what he has given; he took it back again as soon as peace was made and he was no longer in want of me. True enough, I was not worthy to replace M. de Tréville, of illustrious memory; but they had promised me, and they had given me; they ought to have stopped there."

"Is that what dissatisfies you, Monsieur? Well, I will make inquiries. I love justice; and your claim, though made in military fashion, does not displease me."

"Oh, Sire!" said the officer, "your Majesty has ill understood me; I no longer claim anything now."

"Excess of delicacy, Monsieur; but I will keep my eye upon your affairs, and hereafter — "

"Oh, Sire! what a word! — hereafter! Thirty years have I lived upon that promising word, which has been pronounced by so many great personages, and which your mouth has, in its turn, just pronounced. Here-

after! that is how I have received a score of wounds, and how I have reached fifty-four years of age, without ever having had a louis in my purse, and without ever having met with a protector in my road, — I, who have protected so many people! So I change my formula, Sire; and when any one says to me '*Hereafter*,' I reply '*Now*.' It is repose I solicit, Sire. That may be easily granted me. That will cost nobody anything."

"I did not look for this language, Monsieur, particularly from a man who has always lived among the great. You forget you are speaking to the king, to a gentleman who is, I suppose, of as good a house as yourself; and when *I* say 'Hereafter,' it is a certainty."

"I do not at all doubt it, Sire; but this is the end of the terrible truth I had to tell you. If I were to see upon that table a marshal's baton, the sword of constable, the crown of Poland, instead of *Hereafter*, I swear to you, Sire, that I should still say *Now!* Oh, excuse me, Sire! I am from the country of your grandfather, Henry IV. I do not speak often; but when I do speak, I speak all."

"The future of my reign has little temptation for you, Monsieur, it appears," said Louis, haughtily.

"Forgetfulness, forgetfulness everywhere!" cried the officer, with a noble air; "the master has forgotten the servant, so that the servant is reduced to forget his master. I live in unfortunate times, Sire. I see youth full of discouragement and fear, I see it timid and despoiled, when it ought to be rich and powerful. I yesterday evening, for example, open the door of the King of France to a King of England, whose father, humble as I am, I was near saving, if God had not been against me, — God, who inspired his elect, Cromwell! I open, I said, the door, that is to say, of the palace of one brother to

another brother, and I see — stop, Sire, that presses upon my heart! — I see the minister of that king drive away the proscribed prince, and humiliate his master by condemning to want another king, his equal. Then I see my prince, who is young, handsome, and brave, who has courage in his heart and lightning in his eye, — I see him tremble before a priest, who laughs at him behind the curtains of his alcove, where upon his bed he absorbs all the gold of France, which he afterwards stuffs into secret coffers. Yes, I understand your looks, Sire. I am bold to madness; but what is to be said? I am an old man, and I tell you here, Sire, to you, my king, things which I would cram down the throat of any one who should dare to pronounce them before me. You have commanded me to pour out my heart before you, Sire, and I cast at the feet of your Majesty the bile which I have been collecting during thirty years, as I would pour out all my blood, if your Majesty commanded me to do so."

The king, without speaking a word, wiped the drops of cold and abundant sweat which trickled from his temples. The moment of silence which followed this vehement outbreak represented for him who had spoken, and for him who had listened, ages of suffering.

"Monsieur," said the king, at length, "you have pronounced the word 'forgetfulness.' I have heard nothing but that word; I will reply, then, to it alone. Others have perhaps been able to forget, but I have not; and the proof is, that I remember that one day of riot, — that one day in which the furious people, furious and roaring as the sea, invaded the royal palace, — that one day when I feigned to sleep in my bed, one man alone, naked sword in hand, concealed behind my bolster, watched over my life, ready to risk his own for me, as he had

before risked it twenty times for the lives of my family Was not the gentleman, whose name I then demanded, called M. d'Artagnan? Tell me, Monsieur."

"Your Majesty has a good memory," replied the officer, coldly.

"You see, then," continued the king. "if I have such remembrances of my childhood, what a power of remembrance I may acquire in the years of reason."

"Your Majesty has been richly endowed by God," said the officer, in the same tone.

"Come, M. d'Artagnan," continued Louis, with feverish agitation, "ought you not to be as patient as I am? Ought you not to do as I do? Come!"

"And what do you do, Sire?"

"I wait."

"Your Majesty may do so, because you are young; but I, Sire, have not time to wait: old age is at my door, and death follows, looking into the very depths of my house. Your Majesty is beginning life, its future is full of hope and fortune; but I, Sire, — I am at the other side of the horizon, and we are so far from each other that I should never have time to wait till your Majesty came up to me."

Louis made another turn in his apartment, still wiping the sweat from his brow, in a manner that would have terrified his physicians, if his physicians had witnessed the state his Majesty was in.

"Very well, Monsieur," said Louis XIV., in a sharp voice; "you desire your discharge, and you shall have it. You offer me your resignation of the rank of lieutenant of the Musketeers?"

"I deposit it humbly at your Majesty's feet, Sire."

"That is sufficient. I will order your pension."

"I shall have a thousand obligations to your Majesty."

"Monsieur," said the king, with a violent effort, "I think you are losing a good master."

"And I am sure of it, Sire."

"Shall you ever find such another?"

"Oh, Sire! I know that your Majesty is without equal in the world; therefore will I never again take service with any king upon earth, and will never again have other master than myself."

"You say so?"

"I swear so, your Majesty."

"I shall remember that word, Monsieur."

D'Artagnan bowed.

"And you know I have a good memory?" said the king.

"Yes, Sire; and yet I should desire that that memory should fail your Majesty in this instance, in order that you might forget all the miseries I have been forced to spread before your eyes. Your Majesty is so much above the poor and the mean, that I hope —"

"My Majesty, Monsieur, will act like the sun, which looks upon all, great and small, rich and poor, giving lustre to some, warmth to others, life to all. Adieu, M. d'Artagnan, adieu; you are free."

And the king, with a hoarse sob, which was lost in his throat, passed quickly into the next chamber. D'Artagnan took up his hat from the table, upon which he had thrown it, and went out.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PROSCRIBED.

D'ARTAGNAN had not reached the bottom of the staircase, when the king called his gentleman. "I have a commission to give you, Monsieur," said he.

"I am at your Majesty's commands."

"Wait, then." And the young king began to write the following letter, which cost him more than one sigh, although at the same time something like a feeling of triumph glittered in his eyes.

MONSIEUR THE CARDINAL, — Thanks to your good counsels, and, above all, thanks to your firmness, I have succeeded in overcoming a weakness unworthy of a king. You have so ably arranged my destiny that I have been arrested by gratitude at the moment I was about to destroy your work. I have perceived that I was wrong in wishing to make my life deviate from the course you had marked out for it. Assuredly it would have been a misfortune to France and my family if a misunderstanding had taken place between me and my minister. This, however, would certainly have happened if I had made your niece my wife. I am perfectly aware of this, and will henceforth oppose nothing to the accomplishment of my destiny. I am prepared, then, to marry the Infanta Maria Theresa. You may at once open the conference.

Your affectionate LOUIS.

The king, after re-perusing the letter, sealed it himself. "This letter for Monsieur the Cardinal," said he.

The gentleman took it. At Mazarin's door he found Bernouin waiting with anxiety.

"Well?" asked the minister's *valet de chambre.*

"Monsieur," said the gentleman, "here is a letter for his Eminence."

"A letter! Ah! we expected one, after the little journey of the morning."

"Oh! you knew, then, that his Majesty —"

"In quality of first minister, it belongs to the duties of our charge to know everything. And his Majesty prays and implores, I presume."

"I don't know; but he sighed frequently while he was writing."

"Yes, yes, yes; we understand all that: people sigh sometimes from happiness as well as from grief, Monsieur."

"And yet the king did not look very happy when he returned, Monsieur."

"You did not see clearly. Besides, you saw his Majesty only on his return, for he was unaccompanied except by the lieutenant of the Guards. But I had his Eminence's telescope; I looked through it when he was tired, and I am sure they both wept."

"Well! was it for happiness they wept?"

"No, but for love; and they vowed to each other a thousand tendernesses, which the king asks no better than to fulfil. Now, this letter is a beginning of the fulfilment."

"And what does his Eminence think of this love, which is, by the by, no secret to anybody?"

Bernouin took the messenger of Louis by the arm, and while ascending the staircase, — "In confidence," said he, in a low voice, "his Eminence looks for success in the affair. I know very well we shall have war with Spain;

but, bah! war will please the nobles. Monsieur the Cardinal, besides, can endow his niece royally, nay, more than royally. There will be money, festivities, and fireworks, — everybody will be delighted."

"Well, for my part," replied the gentleman, shaking his head, "it appears to me that this letter is very light to contain all that."

"My friend," replied Bernouin, "I am certain of what I say. M. d'Artagnan has told me all."

"Ay, ay! and what did he tell you? Let us hear."

"I accosted him by asking him, on the part of the cardinal, if there were any news, — without discovering my designs, observe, for M. d'Artagnan is a cunning hand. 'My dear M. Bernouin,' he replied, 'the king is madly in love with Mademoiselle de Mancini, — that is all I have to tell you.' And then I asked him: 'To such a degree, do you think, that it will urge him to act contrary to the designs of his Eminence?' 'Ah! don't question me,' said he; 'I think the king capable of anything he has a head of iron, and what he wills he wills in earnest. If he takes it into his head to marry Mademoiselle de Mancini, he will marry her.' And thereupon he left me and went straight to the stables, took a horse, saddled it himself, jumped upon its back, and set off as if the devil were at his heels."

"So that you believe, then — "

"I believe that Monsieur the lieutenant of the Guards knew more than he was willing to say."

"In your opinion, then, M. d'Artagnan — "

"Has gone, according to all probability, after the exiles, to take all measures for the success of the king's love."

Chatting thus, the two confidants arrived at the door of his Eminence's appartement. His Eminence's gout had left him; he was walking about his chamber in a

state of great anxiety, listening at doors and looking out of windows. Bernouin entered, followed by the gentleman, who had orders from the king to place the letter in the hands of the cardinal himself. Mazarin took the letter; but before opening it, he got up a ready smile, — a smile of circumstance, an expression convenient for the concealment of emotions of whatever sort they might be. So prepared, whatever was the impression received from the letter, no reflection of that impression was allowed to appear upon his countenance.

"Well!" said he, when he had read and re-read the letter, "exceedingly well, Monsieur! Inform the king that I thank him for his obedience to the wishes of the queen-mother, and that I will set about doing everything for the accomplishment of his will."

The gentleman left the room. The door had scarcely closed before the cardinal, who had no mask for Bernouin, took off that with which he had so recently covered his face, and with his most sombre expression, — "Call M. de Brienne," said he. Five minutes afterwards, the secretary entered.

"Monsieur," said Mazarin, "I have just rendered a great service to the monarchy, the greatest I have ever rendered it. You will carry this letter, which proves it, to her Majesty the queen-mother; and when she shall have returned it to you, you will lodge it in portfolio B, which is filled with documents and papers relative to my ministry."

Brienne went as desired, and, as the letter was unsealed, did not fail to read it on his way. And of course Bernouin, who was on good terms with everybody, approached so near to the secretary as to be able to read the letter over his shoulder; so that the news spread with such activity through the castle, that Mazarin feared for

a moment it would reach the ears of the queen-mother before M. de Brienne could convey Louis XIV.'s letter to her. A moment after, orders were given for departure; and M. de Condé, having been to pay his respects to the king at his pretended rising, inscribed the city of Poitiers upon his tablets, as the place of sojourn and repose for their Majesties. Thus in a few instants was unravelled an intrigue which had covertly occupied all the diplomacies of Europe. It had nothing, however, very clear as a result, but to make a poor lieutenant of Musketeers lose his commission and his fortune. It is true that in exchange he gained his liberty. We shall soon know how M. d'Artagnan profited by this. For the moment, if the reader will permit us, we will return to the hostelry of the Medici, of which one of the windows opened at the very moment the orders were given for the departure of the king.

The window that opened was that of one of the chambers of Charles II. The unfortunate prince had passed the night in reflection, his head supported by his hands, and his elbows on the table; while Parry, infirm and old, fatigued in body and in mind, had fallen asleep in a corner. A singular fortune was that of this faithful servant, who saw recommencing for the second generation the fearful series of misfortunes which had weighed so heavily on the first. When Charles II. had well thought over the fresh defeat he had experienced, when he perfectly comprehended the complete isolation into which he had just fallen, on seeing his fresh hope left behind him, he was seized as with a vertigo, and sank back in the large *fauteuil* in which he was seated. Then God took pity on the unhappy prince, and sent to console him sleep, the innocent brother of death. He did not wake till half-past six, — that is to say, till the sun shone brightly

into his chamber; and Parry, motionless through fear of waking him, was observing with profound grief the eyes of the young man already red with wakefulness, and his cheeks pale with suffering and privations.

At length the noise of some heavy carts descending towards the Loire awakened Charles. He arose, looked around him like a man who has forgotten everything, perceived Parry, shook him by the hand, and commanded him to settle the reckoning with Master Cropole. Master Cropole, being called upon to settle his account with Parry, acquitted himself, it must be allowed, like an honest man; he only made his customary remark, that the two travellers had eaten nothing, which had the double disadvantage of being humiliating for his kitchen, and of forcing him to ask payment for a repast not consumed, but not the less lost. Parry had nothing to reply, and paid.

"I hope," said the king, "it has not been the same with the horses. I don't see that they have eaten at your expense, and it would be a misfortune for travellers like us, who have a long journey to make, to have our horses fail us."

But Cropole, at this doubt, assumed his majestic air, and replied that the manger of the Medici was not less hospitable than its refectory.

The king mounted his horse; his old servant did the same; and both set out towards Paris, without meeting a single person on their road, in the streets or the faubourgs of the city. For the prince the blow was the more severe, because it was another banishment. The unfortunate cling to the smallest hopes, as the happy do to the greatest good; and when they are obliged to quit the place where that hope has soothed their hearts, they experience the mortal regret which the banished man feels when he

places his foot upon the vessel which is to bear him into exile. It appears that the heart already wounded so many times suffers from the least scratch; it appears that it considers as a good the momentary absence of evil, which is nothing but the absence of pain; and that God, into the most terrible misfortunes, has thrown hope as the drop of water which the rich bad man in hell entreated of Lazarus.

For one instant even the hope of Charles II. had been more than a fugitive joy; that was when he found himself so kindly welcomed by his brother Louis; then it had taken a form and had become a reality; then, all at once, the refusal of Mazarin had reduced the factitious reality to the state of a dream. This promise of Louis XIV., so soon withdrawn, had been nothing but a mockery, — a mockery like his crown, like his sceptre, like his friends, like all that had surrounded his royal childhood, and had abandoned his proscribed youth. Mockery! everything was a mockery for Charles II. except the cold, black repose promised by death.

Such were the ideas of the unfortunate prince while sitting listlessly upon his horse, to which he abandoned the reins. He rode along slowly beneath the warm and pleasant sun of May, in which the sombre misanthropy of the exile perceived a last insult to his grief.

CHAPTER XVI.

"REMEMBER!"

A HORSEMAN who was riding rapidly along the road leading towards Blois, which he had left nearly half an hour before, passed the two travellers, and, though apparently in haste, raised his hat as he went by. The king scarcely observed this young man, who was about twenty-five years of age. Turning round several times, he made friendly gestures to a man standing before the gate of a handsome white-and-red house, — that is to say, built of brick and stone, with a slated roof, situated on the left hand of the road the prince was travelling.

This man, old, tall, and thin, with white hair, — we speak of the man standing by the gate, — this man replied to the farewell signals of the youth by signs of parting as tender as could have been made by a father. The young man disappeared at the first turning of the road, bordered by fine trees; and the old man was preparing to return to the house, when the two travellers, arriving in front of the gate, attracted his attention.

The king, we have said, was riding with his head cast down, his arms inert, leaving his horse to go what pace he liked; while Parry, behind him, the better to imbibe the genial influence of the sun, had taken off his hat, and was looking about to the right and left. His eyes encountered those of the old man leaning against the gate, who, as if struck by some strange spectacle, uttered an exclamation, and made one step towards the two travellers.

From Parry his eyes immediately turned towards the king, upon whom they stopped for an instant. This examination, however rapid, was reflected instantly in a visible manner upon the features of the tall old man. For scarcely had he recognized the younger of the travellers — and we say recognized, for nothing but a perfect recognition could have explained such an act — scarcely, we say, had he recognized the younger of the two travellers, than he joined his hands in respectful surprise, and raising his hat from his head, bowed so profoundly that it might have been said he was kneeling. This demonstration, however distracted, or rather however absorbed, was the king in his reflections, attracted his attention instantly; and checking his horse and turning towards Parry, he exclaimed, "Good God, Parry! who is that man who salutes me in such a marked manner? Can he know me, think you?"

Parry, much agitated and very pale, had already turned his horse towards the gate. "Ah, Sire!" said he, stopping suddenly at five or six paces' distance from the still bending old man; "Sire, I am seized with astonishment, for I think I recognize that brave man. Yes, it must be he! Will your Majesty permit me to speak to him?"

"Certainly."

"Can it be you, M. Grimaud?" asked Parry.

"Yes, it is," replied the tall old man, straightening himself, but without abandoning his respectful attitude.

"Sire," then said Parry, "I was not deceived. This good man is the servant of the Comte de la Fère; and the Comte de la Fère, if you remember, is the worthy gentleman of whom I have so often spoken to your Majesty that the remembrance of him must remain, not only in your mind, but in your heart."

"He who was present at the last moments of the

king my father?" asked Charles, evidently affected at the remembrance.

"The same, Sire."

"Alas!" said Charles; and then addressing Grimaud, whose penetrating and intelligent eyes seemed to search and divine his thoughts, "My friend," said he, "does your master, M. le Comte de la Fère, live in this neighborhood?"

"There," replied Grimaud, pointing with his outstretched arm to the white-and-red house behind the gate.

"And is M. le Comte de la Fère at home at present?"

"At the back, under the chestnut-trees."

"Parry," said the king, "I will not miss this opportunity, so precious for me, to thank the gentleman to whom our house is indebted for such a noble example of devotedness and generosity. Hold my horse, my friend, if you please." And, throwing the bridle to Grimaud, the king entered the abode of Athos, quite alone, as one equal enters the dwelling of another. Charles had been informed by the concise explanation of Grimaud, "At the back, under the chestnut-trees;" he left, therefore, the house on the left, and went straight down the path indicated. The thing was easy; the tops of those noble trees, already covered with leaves and flowers, rose above all the rest. On arriving under the lozenges, by turns luminous and dark, which checkered the ground of this path according as the trees were more or less in leaf, the young prince perceived a gentleman walking with his arms behind him, apparently plunged in a profound reverie. No doubt he had often had this gentleman described to him, for without hesitating, Charles II. walked straight up to him. At the sound of his footsteps the Comte de la Fère raised his head, and seeing

an unknown man of a noble and elegant carriage coming towards him, he lifted his hat and waited. At some paces from him, Charles II. likewise took off his hat. Then, as if in reply to the count's mute interrogation, —

"Monsieur the Count," said he, "I come to discharge a duty towards you. I have, for a long time, had the expression of a profound gratitude to bring you. I am Charles II., son of Charles Stuart, who reigned in England, and died on the scaffold."

On hearing this illustrious name, Athos felt a kind of shudder creep through his veins; but at the sight of the young prince standing uncovered before him and stretching out his hand towards him, two tears, for an instant, dimmed his brilliant eyes. He bent respectfully, but the prince took him by the hand.

"See how unfortunate I am, Monsieur the Count; it is only due to chance that I have met with you. Alas! I ought to have people around me whom I love and honor, whereas I am reduced to preserve their services in my heart, and their names in my memory; so that if your servant had not recognized mine, I should have passed by your door as by that of a stranger."

"It is but too true," said Athos, replying with his voice to the first part of the king's speech, and with a bow to the second, — "it is but too true, indeed, that your Majesty has seen very evil days."

"And worse, alas!" replied Charles, "are perhaps still to come."

"Sire, let us hope."

"Count, Count," continued Charles, shaking his head, "I entertained hope till last night, in the manner of a good Christian, I assure you."

Athos looked at the king as if to question him.

"Oh, the story is soon told," said Charles. "Pro-

scribed, despoiled, disdained, I resolved, in spite of all my repugnance, to tempt fortune one last time. Is it not written above, that, for our family, all good fortune and all bad fortune shall always come from France? You know something of that, Monsieur, — you, who are one of the Frenchmen whom my unfortunate father found at the foot of his scaffold, on the day of his death, after having found them at his right hand on the days of battle."

"Sire," said Athos, modestly, "I was not alone. I and my companions did, under the circumstances, our duty as gentlemen, and that was all. Your Majesty was about to do me the honor to relate — "

"That is true. I had the protection — pardon my hesitation, Count, but, for a Stuart, you, who understand everything, you will comprehend that the word is hard to pronounce, — I had, I say, the protection of my cousin the Stadtholder of Holland; but without the intervention, or at least without the authorization of France, the stadtholder would not take the initiative. I came, then, to ask this authorization of the King of France, who has refused me."

"The king has refused you, Sire!"

"Oh, not he; all justice must be rendered to my young brother Louis; but M. de Mazarin — "

Athos bit his lips.

"You perhaps think I had a right to expect this refusal?" said the king, who had remarked the movement.

"That was, in truth, my thought, Sire," replied Athos, respectfully; "I know that Italian of old."

"Then I determined to push the matter to a conclusion and know at once the last word of my destiny. I told my brother Louis that, not to compromise either

France or Holland, I would tempt fortune myself in person, as I had already done, with two hundred gentlemen, if he would give them to me; and a million, if he would lend it me."

"Well, Sire?"

"Well, Monsieur, I am suffering at this moment something strange; and that is, the satisfaction of despair. There is in certain souls — and I have just discovered that mine is of the number — a real satisfaction in the assurance that all is lost, and the time is come to yield."

"Oh, I hope," said Athos, "that your Majesty has not come to that extremity."

"To say so, Monsieur the Count, to endeavor to revive hope in my heart, you must have ill understood what I have just told you. I came to Blois to ask of my brother Louis the alms of a million, with which I had the hope of re-establishing my affairs; and my brother Louis has refused me. You see, then, plainly that all is lost."

"Will your Majesty permit me to express a contrary opinion?"

"How is that, Count? Do you take me for a soul so commonplace as not to know how to confront my position?"

"Sire, I have always seen that it was in desperate positions that suddenly the great turns of fortune have taken place."

"Thank you, Count; it is some comfort to meet with a heart like yours, — that is to say, sufficiently trustful in God and in monarchy never to despair of a royal fortune, however low it may be fallen. Unfortunately, my dear count, your words are like those remedies they call 'sovereign,' and which, notwithstanding, being only able to cure curable wounds or diseases, fail against death. Thank you for your perseverance in consoling me, Count,

thanks for your devoted remembrance, but I know what I have to trust to, — nothing will save me now. And see, my friend, I was so convinced that I was taking the route of exile, with my old Parry; I was returning to consume my poignant griefs in the little hermitage offered me by Holland. There, believe me, Count, all will soon be over, and death will come quickly; it is called for so often by this body, which the soul consumes, and by this soul, which aspires to heaven."

"Your Majesty has a mother, a sister, and brothers; your Majesty is the head of the family, you ought, therefore, to ask a long life of God, instead of imploring him for a prompt death. Your Majesty is proscribed, a fugitive, but you have right on your side; you ought to aspire to combats, dangers, business, and not to the repose of the heavens."

"Count," said Charles II., with a smile of indescribable sadness, "have you ever heard of a king who re-conquered his kingdom with one servant of the age of Parry, and with three hundred crowns which that servant carries in his purse?"

"No, Sire; but I have heard — and that more than once — that a dethroned king has recovered his kingdom with a firm will, perseverance, some friends, and a million francs skilfully employed."

"But you cannot have understood me. That million I have asked of my brother Louis; he has refused me."

"Sire," said Athos, "will your Majesty grant me a few minutes, and listen attentively to what remains for me to say to you?"

Charles II. looked earnestly at Athos. "Willingly, Monsieur," said he.

"Then I will show your Majesty the way," resumed the count, directing his steps towards the house. He

then conducted the king to his cabinet, and begged him to be seated. "Sire," said he, "your Majesty just now told me that, in the present state of England, a million would suffice for the recovery of your kingdom."

"To attempt it at least, Monsieur; and to die as a king if I should not succeed."

"Well, then, Sire, let your Majesty, according to the promise you have made me, have the goodness to listen to what I have to say." Charles made an affirmative sign with his head. Athos walked straight up to the door, the bolts of which he drew, after having looked to see if anybody was near, and then returned. "Sire," said he, "your Majesty has kindly remembered that I lent assistance to the very noble and very unfortunate Charles I., when his executioners conducted him from St. James's to Whitehall."

"Yes, certainly I do remember it, and always shall remember it."

"Sire, it is a dismal history for a son to listen to, who no doubt has had it related to him many times; and yet I ought to repeat it to your Majesty without omitting one detail."

"Speak on, Monsieur."

"When the king your father ascended the scaffold, or rather when he passed from his chamber to the scaffold, even with his window, everything was prepared for his escape. The executioner was got out of the way; a hole was contrived under the floor of his apartment; I myself was beneath the funereal structure, which I heard all at once creak under his feet."

"Parry has related to me all these terrible details, Monsieur."

Athos bowed, and resumed. "But here is something he has not related to you, Sire, for what follows passed

between God, your father, and myself; and never has the revelation of it been made even to my dearest friends. 'Go a little farther off,' said the august sufferer to the masked executioner; 'it is but for an instant, and I know that I belong to you; but remember not to strike till I give the signal. I wish to offer up my prayers in freedom.'"

"Pardon me," said Charles II., turning very pale, "but you, Count, who know so many details of this melancholy event, — details which, as you said just now, have never been revealed to any one, — do you know the name of that infernal executioner, of that base wretch who concealed his face that he might assassinate a king with impunity?"

Athos became slightly pale. "His name?" said he; "yes, I know it, but cannot tell it."

"And what has become of him, for nobody in England knows his fate?"

"He is dead."

"But he did not die in his bed; he did not die a calm and peaceful death; he did not die the death of the good?"

"He died a violent death, in a terrible night, rendered so by the passions of man and a tempest from God. His body, pierced by a poniard, sank to the depths of the ocean. God pardon his murderer!"

"Proceed then," said Charles II., seeing that the count was unwilling to say more.

"The King of England, after having, as I have said, spoken thus to the masked executioner, added: 'Observe, you will not strike till I shall stretch out my arms, saying, REMEMBER!'"

"I was aware," said Charles, in an agitated voice, "that that was the last word pronounced by my unfortunate father. But with what aim? for whom?"

"For the French gentleman placed beneath his scaffold."

"For you, then, Monsieur."

"Yes, Sire; and every one of the words which he spoke to me, through the planks of the scaffold covered with a black cloth, still sounds in my ears. The king knelt down on one knee: 'Comte de la Fère,' said he, 'are you there?' 'Yes, Sire,' replied I. Then the king stooped towards the boards."

Charles II. also, palpitating with interest, burning with grief, stooped towards Athos, to catch, one by one, every word that escaped from him. His head touched that of the count.

"Then," continued Athos, "the king stooped. 'Comte de la Fère,' said he, 'it was not possible for me to be saved by you; it was not to be. Now, even though I commit a sacrilege, I must speak to you. Yes, I have spoken to men, — yes, I have spoken to God, and I speak to you the last. By supporting a cause which I thought sacred, I have lost the throne of my fathers, and diverted the heritage of my children.'"

Charles II. concealed his face in his hands, and a bitter tear glided between his white and slender fingers.

"'I still have a million in gold,' continued the king. 'I buried it in the vaults of the castle of Newcastle, when I was leaving that city.'"

Charles raised his head with an expression of such painful joy as would have drawn tears from any one acquainted with his misfortunes. "A million!" murmured he. "Oh, Count!"

"'You alone know that this money exists; employ it when you think it can be of the greatest service to my eldest son. And now, Comte de la Fère, bid me adieu!' 'Adieu, adieu, Sire!' cried I."

Charles arose, and went and leaned his burning brow against the window.

"It was then," continued Athos, "the king pronounced the word 'REMEMBER!' addressed to me. You see, Sire, that I have remembered."

The king could not resist or conceal his emotion. Athos beheld the movement of his shoulders, which undulated convulsively; he heard the sobs which burst from his overcharged breast. He was silent himself, suffocated by the flood of bitter remembrances he had just poured upon that royal head. Charles II., with a violent effort, left the window, repressed his tears, and came and reseated himself by Athos. "Sire," said the latter, "I thought till to-day that the time had not yet arrived for the employment of that last resource; but, with my eyes fixed upon England, I believed it was approaching. To-morrow I meant to go and inquire in what part of the world your Majesty was, and then I purposed going to you. You come to me, Sire; that is an indication that God is with us."

"Monsieur," said Charles, in a voice choked by emotion, "you are, for me, what an angel sent from heaven would be, — you are a preserver, sent to me from the tomb of my father by himself; but, believe me, in ten years civil wars have passed over my country, striking down men, tearing up the soil; it is no more probable that gold should remain in the entrails of the earth, than love in the hearts of my subjects."

"Sire, the spot in which his Majesty buried the million is well known to me; and no one, I am sure, has been able to discover it. Besides, is the castle of Newcastle quite destroyed? Have they demolished it stone by stone, and uprooted the soil to the last fibre?"

"No, it is still standing; but at this moment General

Monk occupies it, and is encamped there. The only spot from which I could look for succor, where I possess a single resource, you see, is invaded by my enemies."

"General Monk, Sire, cannot have discovered the treasure I speak of."

"Yes, but can I go and deliver myself up to Monk in order to recover this treasure? Ah, Count! you see plainly I must yield to destiny, since it strikes me to the earth every time I rise. What can I do, with Parry as my only servant, — with Parry, whom Monk has already driven from his presence? No, no, no, Count, we must yield to this last blow."

"But what your Majesty cannot do, and what Parry can no more attempt, do you not believe that I could succeed in?"

"You — you, Count — you would go?"

"If it pleases your Majesty," said Athos, bowing to the king, "yes, I will go, Sire."

"What! you, who are so happy here, Count?"

"I am never happy when I have a duty left to accomplish; and it is an imperative duty which the king your father left me to watch over your fortunes, and make a royal use of his money. So, if your Majesty honors me with a sign, I will go with you."

"Ah, Monsieur!" said the king, forgetting all royal etiquette, and throwing his arms round the neck of Athos, "you prove to me that there is a God in heaven, and that this God sometimes sends messengers to the unfortunate who groan upon the earth."

Athos, exceedingly moved by this burst of feeling of the young man, thanked him with profound respect, and approached the window. "Grimaud!" said he, "my horses."

"What, now — immediately!" said the king. "Ah, Monsieur, you are indeed a wonderful man!"

"Sire," said Athos, "I know of nothing more pressing than your Majesty's service. Besides," added he, smiling, "it is a habit contracted long since, in the service of the queen your aunt, and of the king your father. How is it possible for me to lose it at the moment your Majesty's service calls for it?"

"What a man!" murmured the king.

Then, after a moment's reflection, — "But no, Count, I cannot expose you to such privations. I have no means of rewarding such services."

"Bah!" said Athos, laughing. "Your Majesty is joking; have you not a million? Ah! why am I not possessed of the half of such a sum? I would already have raised a regiment. But, thank God! I have still a few rouleaux of gold and some family diamonds left. Your Majesty will, I hope, deign to share with a devoted servant."

"With a friend — yes, Count; but on condition that, in his turn, that friend will share with me hereafter."

"Sire," said Athos, opening a casket, from which he drew both gold and jewels, "you see, Sire, we are too rich. Fortunately, there are four of us, in the event of meeting with thieves."

Joy made the blood rush to the pale cheeks of Charles II., as he saw Athos's two horses, led by Grimaud, already booted for the journey, advance towards the peristyle.

"Blaisois, this letter for the Vicomte de Bragelonne. To everybody else, I have gone to Paris. I confide the house to you, Blaisois." Blaisois bowed, shook hands with Grimaud, and shut the gate.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH ARAMIS IS SOUGHT FOR, AND ONLY BAZIN FOUND.

Two hours had scarcely passed away after the departure of the master of the house, who, in Blaisois' sight, had taken the road to Paris, when a cavalier, mounted on a good piebald horse, stopped before the gate, and with a sonorous "Holloa!" called the horse-boys, who, with the gardeners, had formed a circle round Blaisois, the historian-in-ordinary to the household of the château. This "Holloa!" doubtless well known to Master Blaisois, made him turn his head and exclaim, "M. d'Artagnan! Run quickly, you chaps, and open the gate."

A swarm of eight brisk lads flew to the gate, which was opened as if it had been made of feathers; and every one loaded him with attentions, for they knew the welcome this friend was accustomed to receive from their master. The eye of the valet may always be depended upon for discoveries of that kind.

"Ah!" said M. d'Artagnan, with an agreeable smile, balancing himself upon his stirrup to jump to the ground, "where is my dear count?"

"Ah! how unfortunate you are, Monsieur!" said Blaisois; "and how unfortunate will Monsieur the Count, our master, think himself when he hears of your coming! By bad luck, Monsieur the Count left home two hours ago."

D'Artagnan did not trouble himself about such trifles "Very good!" said he. "You always speak the best French in the world; you shall give me a lesson in grammar and correct language, while I await the return of your master."

"That is impossible, Monsieur," said Blaisois; "you would have to wait too long."

"Will he not come back to-day, then?"

"No, nor to-morrow, nor the day after to-morrow. Monsieur the Count has gone on a journey."

"A journey!" said D'Artagnan, surprised; "that's a fable, Master Blaisois."

"Monsieur, it is no more than the truth. Monsieur has done me the honor to commit the house to my charge; and he added, with his voice so full of authority and kindness, that is all one to me: 'You will say I have gone to Paris.'"

"Well!" cried D'Artagnan, "since he has gone towards Paris, that is all I wanted to know! you should have told me so at first, booby! He is then two hours in advance?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"I shall soon overtake him. Is he alone?"

"No, Monsieur."

"Who is with him, then?"

"A gentleman whom I don't know, an old man, and M. Grimaud."

"Such a party cannot travel as fast as I can, — I will start."

"Will Monsieur listen to me an instant?" said Blaisois, laying his hand gently on the reins of the horse.

"Yes, if you don't favor me with fine speeches, and will make haste."

"Well, then, Monsieur, that word 'Paris' appears to me to be only a lure."

"Oh, oh!" said D'Artagnan, seriously; "a lure, eh?"

"Yes, Monsieur; and Monsieur the Count is not going to Paris, I will swear."

"What makes you think so?"

"This: M. Grimaud always knows where our master is going; and he had promised me that the first time he went to Paris, he would take a little money for me to my wife."

"What! have you a wife, then?"

"I had one, — she was of this country; but Monsieur found her too garrulous, and I sent her to Paris: it is sometimes inconvenient, but very agreeable at others."

"I understand; but go on. You do not believe the count has gone to Paris?"

"No, Monsieur; for then M. Grimaud would have broken his word, he would have been perjured — and that is impossible."

"That is impossible," repeated D'Artagnan, quite in a study, because he was quite convinced. "Well, my brave Blaisois, many thanks to you." Blaisois bowed. "Come, you know I am not curious — I have serious business with your master. Could you not, by a little end of a word, — you who speak so well, — give me to understand — one syllable only — I will guess the rest?"

"Upon my word, Monsieur, I cannot. I am quite ignorant where Monsieur the Count has gone. As to listening at doors, that is contrary to my nature; and besides, it is forbidden here."

"My dear lad," said D'Artagnan, "this is a very bad beginning for me. Never mind; you know when Monsieur the Count will return, at least?"

"As little, Monsieur, as the place of his destination."

"Come, Blaisois, come, search."

"Monsieur doubts my sincerity? Ah, Monsieur, that grieves me sensibly."

"The devil take his gilded tongue!" grumbled D'Artagnan. "A clown with a word would be worth a dozen of him. Adieu!"

"Monsieur, I have the honor to present you my respects."

"*Cuistre!*" said D'Artagnan to himself, "the fellow is insupportable." He gave another look up to the house, turned his horse's head, and set off like a man who has nothing either annoying or embarrassing in his mind. When he was at the end of the wall, and out of sight, — "Well, now, I wonder," said he, breathing quickly, "whether Athos was at home. No; all those idlers, standing in the court with their arms crossed, would have been at work if the eye of the master was near. Athos gone a journey? — that is incomprehensible. Bah! it is all devilish mysterious! And then — no — he is not the man I want. I want one of a cunning, patient mind. My business is at Melun, in a certain presbytery I know. Forty-five leagues, — four days and a half! Well, it is fine weather, and I am free. We will swallow the distance!"

And he put his horse into a trot, directing his course towards Paris. On the fourth day he alighted at Melun, as he had intended.

D'Artagnan was never accustomed to ask anybody the road, or for any common information. For details of that kind, unless in very serious circumstances, he confided in his perspicacity, never at fault, in his experience of thirty years, and in a great habit of reading the physiognomies of houses as well as those of men. At Melun, D'Artagnan directly found the presbytery, — a charming house, with coatings of plaster over red brick, with vines climbing along the gutters, and a cross, in sculptured stone,

surmounting the ridge of the roof. From the ground-floor of this house escaped a noise, or rather a confusion of voices, like the chirping of young birds when the brood is just hatched under the down. One of these voices was spelling the alphabet distinctly. A voice, thick but yet pleasant, at the same time scolded the talkers and corrected the faults of the reader. D'Artagnan recognized that voice; and as the window of the ground-floor was open, he leaned down from his horse under the branches and red fibres of the vine, and cried, "Bazin, my dear Bazin! good-day to you."

A short fat man, with a flat face, a cranium ornamented with a crown of gray hairs, cut short, in imitation of a tonsure, and covered with an old black velvet cap, arose as soon as he heard D'Artagnan, — we ought not to say *arose*, but *bounded up*. In fact, Bazin bounded up, drawing with him his little low chair, which the children tried to take away, with battles more fierce than those of the Greeks endeavoring to recover the body of Patroclus from the hands of the Trojans. Bazin did more than bound; he let fall both his alphabet and his ferule.

"You!" said he; "you, Monsieur d'Artagnan?"

"Yes, myself! Where is Aramis — no, M. le Chevalier d'Herblay — no, I am still mistaken — Monsieur the Vicar-General?"

"Ah, Monsieur," said Bazin, with dignity, "Monseigneur is at his diocese."

"What did you say?" said D'Artagnan.

Bazin repeated the sentence.

"Ah, ah! but has Aramis a diocese?"

"Yes, Monsieur. Why not?"

"Is he a bishop, then?"

"Why, where can you come from," said Bazin, rather irreverently, "that you don't know that?"

"My dear Bazin, we pagans, we men of the sword, know very well when a man is made a colonel, or commander, or marshal of France; but if he be made bishop, archbishop, or pope, — devil take me, if the news reaches us before the three quarters of the earth have had the advantage of it!"

"Hush! hush!" said Bazin, opening his eyes; "do not spoil these poor children, in whom I am endeavoring to inculcate good principles." In fact, the children had surrounded D'Artagnan, whose horse, long sword, spurs, and martial air they very much admired. But, above all, they admired his strong voice; so that, when he uttered his oath, the whole school cried out, "Devil take me!" with fearful bursts of laughter, shouts, and stamping, which delighted the musketeer and bewildered the old pedagogue.

"There!" said he, "hold your tongues, you brats! You are come, M. d'Artagnan, and all my good principles fly away. With you, as usual, comes disorder. Babel is revived. Ah! good Lord! Ah! the wild little wretches!" and the worthy Bazin distributed right and left blows which redoubled the cries of his scholars, while changing their significance. "At least," said he, "you cannot debauch any one here."

"Do you think so?" said D'Artagnan, with a smile which made a shudder creep over the shoulders of Bazin.

"He is capable of it," murmured he.

"Where is your master's diocese?"

"Monseigneur René is bishop of Vannes."

"Who caused him to be nominated?"

"Why, Monsieur the superintendent, our neighbor."

"What! M. Fouquet?"

"To be sure."

"Is Aramis on good terms with him, then?"

"Monseigneur preached every Sunday at the house of Monsieur the superintendent at Vaux; then they hunted together."

"Ah!"

"And Monseigneur composed his homilies — no, I mean his sermons — with Monsieur the superintendent."

"Bah! he preached in verse, then, this worthy bishop?"

"Monsieur, for the love of heaven, do not jest with sacred things."

"There, Bazin, there! So, then, Aramis is at Vannes?"

"At Vannes, in Bretagne."

"You are a deceitful old hunks, Bazin; that is not true."

"See, Monsieur, if you please; the apartments of the presbytery are empty."

"He is right there," said D'Artagnan, looking attentively at the house, the aspect of which announced that it was unoccupied.

"But Monseigneur must have written you an account of his promotion."

"From when does it date?"

"A month back."

"Oh! then there is no time lost. Aramis cannot yet have wanted me. But how is it, Bazin, you do not follow your master?"

"Monsieur, I cannot; I have occupations."

"Your alphabet?"

"And my penitents."

"What! you confess? You are a priest?"

"The same as one. I have such a call."

"But the orders?"

"Oh!" said Bazin, with an air, "now that Monseigneur

is a bishop, I shall soon have my orders, or at least my dispensations;" and he rubbed his hands.

"Decidedly," said D'Artagnan to himself, "there will be no uprooting these people. Get me some supper, Bazin."

"With pleasure, Monsieur."

"A fowl, a *bouillon*, and a bottle of wine."

"This is Saturday, Monsieur, — it is a fast-day."

"I have a dispensation," said D'Artagnan.

Bazin looked at him suspiciously.

"Ah, ah, master hypocrite!" said the musketeer, "for whom do you take me? If you, who are the valet, hope for dispensation for committing a crime, shall not I, the friend of your bishop, have dispensation for eating meat at the call of my stomach? Make yourself agreeable with me, Bazin, or, by heaven! I will complain to the king, and you shall never confess. Now, you know that the nomination of bishops rests with the king, — I have the king, I am the stronger."

Bazin smiled hypocritically. "Ah, but we — we have Monsieur the superintendent," said he.

"And you laugh at the king, then?"

Bazin made no reply; his smile was sufficiently eloquent.

"My supper," said D'Artagnan; "it is getting towards seven o'clock."

Bazin turned round and ordered the eldest of the pupils to inform the cook. In the mean time D'Artagnan surveyed the presbytery.

"Pugh!" said he, disdainfully, "Monseigneur lodged his grandeur but very meanly here."

"We have the Château de Vaux," said Bazin.

"Which is perhaps equal to the Louvre?" said D'Artagnan, jeeringly.

"Which is better," replied Bazin, with the greatest coolness imaginable.

"Ah, ah!" said D'Artagnan.

He would perhaps have prolonged the discussion, and maintained the superiority of the Louvre, but the lieutenant perceived that his horse remained fastened to the bars of a gate.

"The dèvil!" said he. "Get my horse looked after; your master the bishop has none like him in his stables."

Bazin cast a sidelong glance at the horse, and replied, "Monsieur the superintendent gave him four from his own stables; and each of the four is worth four of yours."

The blood mounted to the face of D'Artagnan. His hand itched, and he selected on the head of Bazin the place to plant his fist. But that flash passed away; reflection came, and D'Artagnan contented himself with saying: "The devil! the devil! I have done well to quit the service of the king. Tell me, worthy Master Bazin," added he, "how many musketeers has Monsieur the superintendent?"

"He could have all there are in the kingdom with his money," replied Bazin, closing his book, and dismissing the boys with noisy strokes of his ferule.

"The devil! the devil!" repeated D'Artagnan, once more.

Supper was now announced; and he followed the cook, who introduced him into the refectory, where it awaited him. D'Artagnan placed himself at table, and commenced a hearty attack upon his fowl.

"It appears to me," said D'Artagnan, biting with all his might at the tough fowl which they had served up to him, and which they had evidently forgotten to fatten, — "it appears to me that I have done wrong in not going to

take service in the suite of that master yonder. A powerful noble this intendant, seemingly! In good truth, we poor fellows know nothing at the court; and the rays of the sun prevent our seeing the large stars, which are suns also, at a little greater distance from our earth, — that is all."

As D'Artagnan delighted, both from pleasure and system, in making people talk about things which interested him, he fenced in his best style with Master Bazin, but it was pure loss of time, beyond the fatiguing and hyperbolical praises of Monsieur the superintendent of the finances, Bazin, who, on his side, was on his guard, afforded nothing but platitudes to the curiosity of D'Artagnan; so that our musketeer, in a tolerably bad humor, desired to go to bed as soon as he had supped. D'Artagnan was introduced by Bazin into a mean chamber, in which there was as poor a bed; but D'Artagnan was not fastidious in that respect. He had been told that Aramis had taken away the keys of his own private apartment; and as he knew Aramis was a very particular man, and had generally many things to conceal in his apartment, that had not at all astonished him. He had, therefore, — although it appeared comparatively even harder, — attacked the bed as bravely as he had done the fowl; and as he had as good an inclination to sleep as he had had to eat, he took scarcely longer time to fall asleep than he had employed in picking the last bones of the bird.

Since he was no longer in the service of any one, D'Artagnan had promised himself to indulge in sleeping as soundly as he had formerly slept lightly; but with whatever good faith D'Artagnan had made himself this promise, and whatever desire he might have to keep it religiously, he was awakened in the middle of the night

by a loud noise of carriages, and servants on horseback. A sudden illumination flashed over the walls of his chamber; he jumped out of bed and ran to the window in his shirt.

"Can the king be coming this way?" thought he, rubbing his eyes; "in truth, such a suite can only be attached to royalty."

"Vive Monsieur le Surintendant!" cried, or rather vociferated, from a window on the ground-floor, a voice which he recognized as Bazin's, who, while so crying, waved a handkerchief with one hand, and held a large candle in the other. D'Artagnan then saw something like a brilliant human form leaning out at the window of the principal carriage; at the same time loud bursts of laughter, provoked no doubt by the strange figure of Bazin, and which issued from the same carriage, left, as it were, a train of joy upon the passage of the rapid *cortége*.

"I might easily see it was not the king," said D'Artagnan; "people don't laugh so heartily when the king passes. Hollon, Bazin!" cried he to his neighbor, who was still leaning three parts out of the window, to follow the carriage with his eyes as long as he could. "What is all that about?"

"It is M. Fouquet," replied Bazin, in a patronizing tone.

"And all those people?"

"That is the court of M. Fouquet."

"Oh, oh!" said D'Artagnan; "what would M. de Mazarin say to that if he heard it?" and he lay down again, asking himself how Aramis always contrived to be protected by the most powerful person in the kingdom. "Is it that he has more luck than I, or that I am a greater fool than he? Bah!" That was the concluding

word by the aid of which D'Artagnan, become wise, now terminated every thought and every period of his style. Formerly he said, *Mordioux!* which was a prick of the spur; but now he had become older, he murmured that philosophical *Bah!* which served as a bridle to all the passions.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN SEEKS FOR PORTHOS, AND ONLY FINDS MOUSQUETON.

When D'Artagnan had perfectly convinced himself that the absence of the Vicaire-Général d'Herblay was real, and that his friend was not to be found at Melun or in its environs, he left Bazin without regret, gave an ill-natured glance at the magnificent Château de Vaux, which was beginning to shine with that splendor which brought on its ruin, and, compressing his lips like a man full of mistrust and suspicion, he put spurs to his piebald horse, saying, "Well, well! I have still Pierrefonds left, and there I shall find the best man and the best-filled coffer. And that is all I want, for I have an idea of my own."

We will spare our readers the prosaic incidents of D'Artagnan's journey, which terminated on the morning of the third day within sight of Pierrefonds. D'Artagnan came by the way of Nanteuil-le-Hardouin and Crépy. At a distance he perceived the Castle of Louis d'Orléans, which, having become part of the crown domain, was kept by an old *concierge*. This was one of those marvellous manors of the middle ages, with walls twenty feet in thickness, and towers a hundred in height. D'Artagnan rode slowly past its walls, measured its towers with his eyes, and descended into the valley. From a distance he looked down upon the château of Porthos, situated on the shores of a large pond, and contiguous to a magnificent forest. It was the same place we have

already had the honor of describing to our readers; we shall therefore satisfy ourselves with naming it. The first thing D'Artagnan perceived after the fine trees, the sun of May gilding the sides of the green hills, long rows of feather-topped wood which stretched out towards Compiègne, was a large rolling box, pushed forward by two servants and dragged by two others. In this box there was an enormous green-and-gold thing, which moved along the smiling glades of the park, thus dragged and pushed. This thing, at a distance, was not to be made out, and signified absolutely nothing; nearer, it was a tun muffled in gold-bound green cloth; nearer still, it was a man, or rather an animal, the lower part of which, extending itself in the interior of the box, entirely filled it; nearer still, the man was Mousqueton — Mousqueton, with gray hair and a face as red as Punchinello's.

"*Pardieu!*" cried D'Artagnan; "why, that 's my dear M. Mousqueton!"

"Ah!" cried the fat man, "ah! what happiness! what joy! There 's M. d'Artagnan. Stop, you rascals!" These last words were addressed to the lackeys who pushed and dragged him. The box stopped; and the four lackeys, with a precision quite military, took off their laced hats and ranged themselves behind it.

"Oh, M. d'Artagnan!" said Mousqueton; "why can I not embrace your knees? But I am become impotent, as you see."

"*Dame!* my dear Mousqueton, it is age."

"No, Monsieur, it is not age; it is infirmities, — troubles."

"Troubles! you, Mousqueton?" said D'Artagnan, making the tour of the box; "are you out of your mind, my dear friend? Thank God! you are as hearty as a three-hundred-year-old oak."

"Ah! but my legs, Monsieur, — my legs!" groaned the faithful servant.

"What's the matter with your legs?"

"Oh, they will no longer bear me!"

"Ah, the ingrates! And yet you feed them well, Mousqueton, apparently."

"Alas, yes! They have nothing to reproach me with in that respect," said Mousqueton, with a sigh; "I have always done what I could for my poor body; I am not selfish;" and Mousqueton sighed afresh.

"I wonder whether Mousqueton wants to be a baron too, as he sighs after that fashion?" thought D'Artagnan.

"*Mon Dieu*, monsieur!" said Mousqueton, as if rousing himself from a painful revery; "how happy Monseigneur will be that you have thought of him!"

"Kind Porthos!" cried D'Artagnan, "I am anxious to embrace him."

"Oh!" said Mousqueton, much affected, "I will certainly write to him."

"How!" cried D'Artagnan, "you will write to him?"

"This very day, at once."

"Is he not here, then?"

"No, Monsieur."

"But is he near at hand? Is he far off?"

"Oh, can I tell, Monsieur, can I tell?"

"*Mordioux!*" cried the musketeer, stamping with his foot. "I am the sport of misfortune. Porthos such a stay-at-home!"

"Monsieur, there is not a more sedentary man than Monseigneur; but —"

"But what?"

"When a friend presses you —"

"A friend?"

"Doubtless, — the worthy M. d'Herblay."

"What! has Aramis pressed Porthos?"

"This is how the thing happened, M. d'Artagnan. M. d'Herblay wrote to Monseigneur —"

"Indeed!"

"A letter, Monsieur, — such a pressing letter that it threw us all into a terrible excitement."

"Tell me all about it, my dear friend," said D'Artagnan; "but remove these people a little farther off first."

Mousqueton shouted, "Fall back, you sirs!" with such powerful lungs that the breath, without the words, would have been sufficient to disperse the four lackeys. D'Artagnan seated himself on the shaft of the box and opened his ears. "Monsieur," said Mousqueton, "Monseigneur, then, received a letter from M. le Vicaire-Général d'Herblay, eight or nine days ago; it was the day of the pleasures — sylvan; yes, it was therefore Wednesday."

"What does that mean?" said D'Artagnan, — "the day of the sylvan pleasures?"

"Yes, Monsieur; we have so many pleasures to take in this delightful country, that we were encumbered by them, — so much so that we have been forced to reduce them to a system."

"How easily do I recognize Porthos's love of order in that! Now, that idea would never have occurred to me; but then I am not encumbered with pleasures."

"We were, though," said Mousqueton.

"And how did you regulate the matter? Let me know," said D'Artagnan.

"It is rather long, Monsieur."

"Never mind, we have plenty of time; and you speak so well, my dear Mousqueton, that it is really a pleasure to hear you."

"It is true," said Mousqueton, with a sigh of satisfaction, which emanated evidently from the justice which

had been rendered him, — "it is true I have made great progress in the company of Monseigneur."

"I am waiting for the distribution of the pleasures, Mousqueton, and with impatience. I want to know if I have arrived on a lucky day."

"Oh, Monsieur d'Artagnan," said Mousqueton in a melancholy tone, "since Monseigneur's departure all the pleasures are gone too."

"Well, my dear Mousqueton, refresh your memory."

"With what day shall I begin?"

"Eh, *pardieu!* begin with Sunday, that is the Lord's day."

"Sunday, Monsieur?"

"Yes."

"Sunday pleasures are religious: Monseigneur goes to Mass, makes the bread-offering, and has discourses and instructions made to him by his almoner-in-ordinary. That is not very amusing; but we expect a Carmelite from Paris who will do the duty of our almonry, and who, we are assured, speaks very well, — which will keep us awake, whereas our present almoner always sends us to sleep. These are Sunday, religious pleasures. On Monday worldly pleasures."

"Ah, ah!" said D'Artagnan, "what do you mean by that, Mousqueton? Let us have a glimpse at your worldly pleasures."

"Monsieur, on Monday we go into the world; we pay and receive visits, we play on the lute, we dance, we make verses, and burn a little incense in honor of the ladies."

"*Peste!* that is the height of gallantry," said the musketeer, who was obliged to call to his aid all the strength of his mastoid muscles to suppress a great inclination to laugh.

"Tuesday, pleasures of learning."

"Good!" cried D'Artagnan. "What are they? Detail them, my dear Mousqueton."

"Monseigneur has bought a sphere or globe, which I will show you; it fills all the perimeter of the great tower, except a gallery which he has had built over the sphere; there are little strings and brass wires to which the sun and moon are hooked. It all turns; and that is very beautiful. Monseigneur points out to me seas and distant countries. We don't intend to visit them, but it is very interesting."

"Interesting! yes, that's the word," repeated D'Artagnan. "And Wednesday?"

"Sylvan pleasures, as I have had the honor to tell you, Monsieur the Chevalier. We look over Monseigneur's sheep and goats; we make the shepherds dance to pipes and reeds, as is written in a book Monseigneur has in his library, which is called 'Bergeries.' The author died about a month ago."

"M. Racan, perhaps," said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, that was his name, — M. Racan. But that is not all; we angle in the little canal, after which we dine, crowned with flowers. That is Wednesday."

"*Peste!*" said D'Artagnan; "you don't divide your pleasures badly. And Thursday? — what can be left for poor Thursday?"

"It is not very unfortunate, Monsieur," said Mousqueton, smiling. "Thursday, Olympic pleasures. Ah, Monsieur, that is superb! We get together all Monseigneur's young vassals, and we make them throw the disc, wrestle, and run races. Monseigneur can't run now, no more can I; but Monseigneur throws the disc as nobody else can throw it. And when he does deal a blow with his fist, oh, that proves a misfortune!"

"How so?"

"Yes, Monsieur, we were obliged to renounce the cestus. He cracked heads; he broke jaws, beat in ribs. It was charming sport; but nobody was willing to play with him."

"Then his wrist —"

"Oh, Monsieur, more firm than ever. Monseigneur gets a little weaker in his legs, — he confesses that himself; but his strength has all gone to his arms, so that —"

"So that he can knock down bullocks, as of old."

"Monsieur, better than that, — he beats in walls. Lately, after having supped with one of our farmers, — you know how popular and kind Monseigneur is, — after supper, as a joke, he struck the wall a blow. The wall crumbled away beneath his hand, the roof fell, and three men and an old woman were stifled."

"Good God, Mousqueton! And your master?"

"Oh, Monseigneur, his head had a little skin rubbed off. We bathed the wounds with the water which the monks give us. But there was nothing the matter with his hand."

"Nothing?"

"No, nothing, Monsieur."

"Deuce take the Olympic pleasures! They must cost your master too dear; for widows and orphans —"

"They all had pensions, Monsieur; a tenth of Monseigneur's revenue was spent in that way."

"Then pass on to Friday," said D'Artagnan.

"Friday, noble and warlike pleasures. We hunt, we fence, we dress falcons and break horses. Then, Saturday is the day for intellectual pleasures: we furnish our minds; we look at Monseigneur's pictures and statues; we write, even, and trace plans; and then we fire Monseigneur's cannon."

"You draw plans, and fire cannon?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Why, my friend," said D'Artagnan, "M. du Vallon, in truth, possesses the most subtle and amiable mind that I know. But there is one kind of pleasure you have forgotten, it appears to me."

"What is that, Monsieur?" asked Mousqueton, with anxiety.

"The material pleasures."

Mousqueton colored. "What do you mean by that, Monsieur?" said he, casting down his eyes.

"I mean the table — good wine — evenings occupied in the circulation of the bottle."

"Ah, Monsieur, we don't reckon those pleasures, — we practise them every day."

"My brave Mousqueton," resumed D'Artagnan, "pardon me, but I was so absorbed in your charming recital that I have forgotten the principal object of our conversation, which was to learn what M. le Vicaire-Général d'Herblay could have to write to your master about?"

"That is true, Monsieur," said Mousqueton; "the pleasures have misled us. Well, Monsieur, this is the whole affair."

"I am all attention, Mousqueton."

"On Wednesday — "

"The day of the sylvan pleasures?"

"Yes — a letter arrived; he received it from my hands. I had recognized the writing."

"Well?"

"Monseigneur read it and cried out, 'Quick! my horses! my arms!'"

"Oh, good Lord! then it was for some duel?" said D'Artagnan.

"No, Monsieur, there were only these words: 'Dear

Porthos, set out, if you would wish to arrive before the Equinox. I expect you.' "

"*Mordioux!*" said D'Artagnan, thoughtfully, "that is pressing, apparently."

"I think so; therefore," continued Mousqueton, "Monseigneur set out the very same day with his secretary, in order to endeavor to arrive in time."

"And did he arrive in time?"

"I hope so; Monseigneur, who is hasty, as you know, Monsieur, repeated unceasingly, '*Tonne Dieu!* What can this mean? The Equinox? Never mind, the fellow must be well mounted if he arrives before I do.' "

"And you think Porthos will have arrived first, do you?" asked D'Artagnan.

"I am sure of it. This Equinox, however rich he may be, has certainly no horses so good as Monseigneur's."

D'Artagnan repressed his inclination to laugh, because the brevity of Aramis's letter gave rise to reflection. He followed Mousqueton, or rather Mousqueton's chariot, to the castle. He sat down to a sumptuous table, of which they did him the honors as to a king. But he could draw nothing from Mousqueton, — the faithful servant shed tears at will, but that was all.

D'Artagnan, after a night passed in an excellent bed, reflected much upon the meaning of Aramis's letter; puzzled himself as to the relation of the Equinox with the affairs of Porthos; and being unable to make anything out, unless it concerned some amour of the bishop, for which it was necessary that the days and nights should be equal, D'Artagnan left Pierrefonds as he had left Melun, as he had left the château of the Comte de la Fère. It was not, however, without melancholy, which might by good right pass for one of the dullest of D'Artagnan's humors. His head cast down, his eyes

fixed, he suffered his legs to hang on each side of his horse, and said to himself, in that vague sort of reverie which reaches sometimes the sublimest eloquence, —

"No more friends! no more future! no more anything! My energies are broken like the bonds of our ancient friendship. Oh, old age arrives, cold and inexorable; it envelops in its funereal crape all that was brilliant, all that was of sweet odor in my youth; then it throws that pleasant burden on its shoulders and carries it away with the rest into the fathomless gulf of death."

A shudder crept through the heart of the Gascon, so brave and so strong against all the misfortunes of life; and for some moments the clouds appeared black to him, the earth slippery and full of pits as that of cemeteries.

"Whither am I going?" said he to himself. "What am I going to do? Alone, quite alone, — without family, without friends! Bah!" cried he, all at once. And he clapped spurs to his horse, who, having found nothing melancholy in the heavy oats of Pierrefonds, profited by this permission to show his gayety in a gallop which covered two leagues. "To Paris!" said D'Artagnan to himself. And on the morrow he alighted in Paris. He had devoted ten days to this journey.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT D'ARTAGNAN DID IN PARIS.

THE lieutenant dismounted before a shop in the Rue des Lombards, at the sign of the Pilon d'Or. A man of good appearance, wearing a white apron, and stroking his gray mustache with a large hand, uttered a cry of joy on perceiving the piebald horse. "Monsieur the Chevalier!" said he, "ah, is that you?"

"Good-day, Planchet," replied D'Artagnan, stooping to enter the shop.

"Quick, somebody," cried Planchet, "to look after M. d'Artagnan's horse, — somebody to get ready his chamber, — somebody to prepare his supper."

"Thanks, Planchet. Good-day, my children," said D'Artagnan to the eager boys.

"Allow me to send off this coffee, this molasses, and these raisins," said Planchet; "they are for the office of Monsieur the superintendent."

"Send them off, send them off!"

"That is only the affair of a moment; then we will sup."

"Order so that we may sup alone," said D'Artagnan; "I want to speak to you."

Planchet looked at his old master in a significant manner.

"Oh, be at ease! it is nothing unpleasant," said D'Artagnan.

"So much the better, so much the better!" and Planchet breathed freely again, while D'Artagnan seated

himself quietly down in the shop, upon a bale of corks, and observed his surroundings. The shop was well stocked; there was a mingled perfume of ginger, cinnamon, and ground pepper, which made D'Artagnan sneeze. The shop-boys, proud of being in company with so renowned a soldier, a lieutenant of Musketeers, who approached the person of the king, began to work with an enthusiasm which was something like delirium, and to serve the customers with a disdainful precipitation that was remarked by several.

Planchet put away his money, and made up his accounts, amidst civilities addressed to his old master. Planchet exercised towards his customers the short speech and the haughty familiarity of the rich shopkeeper who serves everybody and waits for nobody. D'Artagnan observed this difference with a pleasure which presently we will analyze. He saw night come on by degrees; and at length Planchet conducted him to a chamber on the first story, where, amidst bales and chests, a table very nicely set out awaited the two guests.

D'Artagnan took advantage of a moment's pause to examine the countenance of Planchet, whom he had not seen for a year past. The shrewd Planchet had acquired a slight protuberance in front, but his countenance was not puffed. His keen eyes still played easily in their deep-sunk orbits; and fat, which levels all the characteristic saliences of the human face, had not yet touched either his high cheek-bones, the index of cunning and cupidity, or his pointed chin, the index of acuteness and perseverance. Planchet reigned with as much majesty in his dining-room as in his shop. He set before his master a frugal, but a perfectly Parisian repast, — roast meat cooked at the baker's, with vegetables, salad, and a dessert borrowed from the shop itself. D'Artagnan was

pleased that the grocer had drawn from behind the fagots a bottle of that Anjou wine which, during all his life, had been D'Artagnan's chosen wine.

"Formerly, Monsieur," said Planchet, with a smile full of comradeship, "it was I who drank your wine; now you do me the honor to drink mine."

"And, thank God, friend Planchet, I shall drink it for a long time to come, I hope; for at present I am free."

"Free? You have leave of absence, Monsieur?"

"Unlimited."

"You are leaving the service?" said Planchet, stupefied.

"Yes, I am resting."

"And the king?" cried Planchet, who could not suppose it possible that the king could do without the services of such a man as D'Artagnan.

"The king will try his fortune elsewhere. But we have supped well, you are disposed to enjoy yourself; you provoke me to repose confidence in you. Open your ears, then."

"They are open;" and Planchet, with a laugh more frank than cunning, opened a bottle of white wine.

"Leave me my reason, though."

"Oh, as to you losing your head, — you, Monsieur!"

"Now my head is my own, and I mean to take better care of it than ever. In the first place, we will talk of finance. How fares your money-box?"

"Wonderfully well, Monsieur. The twenty thousand livres I had of you are still employed in my trade, in which they bring me nine per cent. I give you seven, so I gain two by you."

"And you are still satisfied?"

"Delighted. Have you brought me any more?"

"Better than that. But do you want any?"

"Oh! not at all. Every one is willing to trust me now. I am extending my business."

"That was your project."

"I play the banker a little. I buy goods of my necessitous brethren; I lend money to those who are not ready for their payments."

"Without usury?"

"Oh! Monsieur, in the course of the last week I have had two meetings on the boulevards, on account of the word you have just pronounced."

"What?"

"You shall see: it concerned a loan. The borrower gives me in pledge some raw sugars, upon condition that I should sell if repayment were not made at a fixed period. I lend a thousand livres. He does not pay me, and I sell the sugars for thirteen hundred livres. He learns this and claims a hundred crowns. *Ma foi!* I refused, pretending that I could not sell them for more than nine hundred livres. He accused me of usury. I begged him to repeat that word to me behind the boulevards. He was an old guard, and he came; and I passed your sword through his left thigh."

"*Tudieu!* what a pretty sort of banker you make!" said D'Artagnan.

"For above thirteen per cent I fight," replied Planchet; "that is my character."

"Take only twelve," said D'Artagnan, "and call the rest premium and brokerage."

"You are right, Monsieur; but to your business."

"Ah! Planchet, it is very long and very hard to speak."

"Speak it, nevertheless." D'Artagnan twisted his mustache like a man embarrassed with the confidence he is about to repose, and mistrustful of his confidant.

"Is it an investment?" asked Planchet.

"Why, yes."

"At good profit?"

"A capital profit, — four hundred per cent, Planchet."

Planchet gave such a blow with his fist upon the table that the bottles bounded as if they had been frightened.

"Good heavens! is that possible?"

"I think it will be more," replied D'Artagnan, coolly; "but I like to lay it at the lowest."

"The devil!" said Planchet, drawing nearer. "Why, Monsieur, that is magnificent! Can one place much money in it?"

"Twenty thousand livres each, Planchet."

"Why, that is all you have, Monsieur. For how long a time?"

"For a month."

"And that will give us — "

"Fifty thousand livres each, profit."

"It is monstrous! It is worth while to fight for such interest as that."

"In fact, I believe it will be necessary to fight not a little," said D'Artagnan, with the same tranquillity; "but this time there are two of us, Planchet, and I will take all the blows to myself."

"Oh, Monsieur, I will not allow that."

"Planchet, you cannot be concerned in it; you would be obliged to leave your business and your family."

"The affair is not in Paris, then."

"No."

"Ah! abroad?"

"In England."

"A speculative country, that is true," said Planchet, — "a country I am well acquainted with. What sort of an affair, Monsieur, — without too much curiosity?"

"Planchet, it is a restoration."

"Of monuments?"

"Yes, of monuments; we will restore Whitehall."

"That is important. And in a month, you think?"

"I will undertake it."

"That concerns you, Monsieur; and when once you are engaged —"

"Yes, that concerns me. I know what I am about; nevertheless, I will freely consult with you."

"You do me great honor; but I know very little about architecture."

"Planchet, you are wrong; you are an excellent architect, — quite as good as I am, for the case in question."

"Thanks —"

"I have been, I confess, tempted to name the thing to those gentlemen we know of, but they are all absent from their houses. It is vexatious, for I know none more bold or more able."

"Ah! then it appears there will be an opposition, and the enterprise will be disputed?"

"Oh yes, Planchet, yes."

"I burn to know the details, Monsieur."

"They are these, Planchet. Close all the doors firmly."

"Yes, monsieur;" and Planchet double-locked them.

"That is well; now draw near." Planchet obeyed. "And open the window, because the noise of the passers by and the carts will deafen all who might hear us."

Planchet opened the window as desired, and the puff of tumult which filled the chamber with cries, wheels, barkings, and steps deafened D'Artagnan himself, as he had wished. He then swallowed a glass of white wine, and began in these terms: "Planchet, I have an idea."

"Ah! Monsieur, I recognize you so well in that!" replied Planchet, panting with emotion.

CHAPTER XX.

OF THE SOCIETY WHICH WAS FORMED IN THE RUE DES LOMBARDS, AT THE SIGN OF THE PILON D'OR, TO CARRY OUT THE IDEA OF M. D'ARTAGNAN.

After an instant of silence, in which D'Artagnan appeared to be collecting, not one idea, but all his ideas — "It cannot be, my dear Planchet," said he, "that you have not heard mention of his Majesty Charles I., King of England?"

"Alas! yes, Monsieur, since you left France in order to carry him assistance, and since, in spite of that assistance, he fell, and was near dragging you down in his fall."

"Exactly so; I see you have a good memory, Planchet."

"*Peste!* Monsieur, the astonishing thing would be, if I could have lost that memory, however bad it might have been. When one has heard Grimaud, who, you know, is not given to talking, relate how the head of King Charles fell, how you sailed the half of a night in a scuttled vessel, and saw rise upon the surface of the water that good M. Mordaunt with a certain gold-hafted poniard sticking in his breast, one is not very likely to forget such things."

"And yet there are people who forget them, Planchet."

"Yes; such as have not seen them, or have not heard Grimaud relate them."

"Well, it is all the better that you recollect all that; I shall only have to remind you of one thing, and that is, that Charles I. had a son."

"Without contradicting you, Monsieur, he had two," said Planchet; "for I saw the second in Paris, Monsieur the Duke of York, one day, as he was going to the Palais Royal, and I was told that he was only the second son of Charles I. As to the eldest, I have the honor of knowing him by name, but not personally."

"That is exactly the point, Planchet, we must come to, — to this eldest son, formerly called the Prince of Wales, and who is now styled Charles II, King of England."

"A king without a kingdom, Monsieur," replied Planchet, sententiously.

"Yes, Planchet; and you may add an unfortunate prince, more unfortunate than a man of the dregs of the people in the worst quarter of Paris."

Planchet made a gesture full of that easy compassion which we grant to strangers with whom we think we can never possibly find ourselves in contact. Besides, he did not see in these politico-sentimental utterances any sign of the commercial idea of M. D'Artagnan, and it was in this that he was principally interested. D'Artagnan, who was, by habit, pretty well acquainted with men and things, understood Planchet.

"I am coming to our business," said he. "This young Prince of Wales — a king without a kingdom, as you have so well said, Planchet — has interested me, — me, D'Artagnan. I have seen him begging assistance of Mazarin, who is a dirty pedant, and the aid of Louis, who is a child; and it appeared to me, who am acquainted with such things, that in the intelligent eye of the fallen king, in the nobleness of his whole person, — a nobleness apparent above all his miseries, — I could discern the stuff of a man and the heart of a king."

Planchet tacitly approved of all this; but it did not at all, in his eyes at least, throw any light upon D'Ar-

tagnan's idea. The latter continued: "This, then, is the reasoning which I made with myself. Listen attentively, Planchet, for we are coming to the conclusion."

"I am listening."

"Kings are not so thickly sown upon the earth that people can find them whenever they want them. Now, this king without a kingdom is, in my opinion, a grain of seed which will blossom in some season or other, provided a skilful, discreet, and vigorous hand sow it duly and truly, selecting soil, sky, and time."

Planchet still approved by a nod of his head, which showed that he did not perfectly comprehend all that was said.

"'Poor little seed of a king!' said I to myself; "and really I was affected, Planchet, which leads me to think I am entering upon a foolish business. And that is why I wished to consult you, my friend."

Planchet colored with pleasure and pride.

"'Poor little seed of a king! I will pick you up and cast you into good ground.'"

"Good God!" said Planchet, looking earnestly at his old master, as if in doubt of the state of his reason.

"Well, what is it?" said D'Artagnan; "what hurts you?"

"Me! nothing, Monsieur."

"You said 'Good God!'"

"Did I?"

"I am sure you did. Can you already understand?"

"I confess, M. d'Artagnan, that I am afraid —"

"To understand?"

"Yes."

"To understand that I wish to replace upon his throne this King Charles II., who has no throne? Is that it?"

Planchet made a prodigious bound in his chair. "Ah,

ah!" said he, in evident terror, "that is what you call a restoration!"

"Yes, Planchet; is not that the proper term for it?"

"Oh, no doubt, — no doubt! But have you reflected seriously?"

"Upon what?"

"Upon what is going on yonder."

"Where?"

"In England."

"And what is that? Let us see, Planchet."

"In the first place, Monsieur, I ask your pardon for meddling in these things which have nothing to do with my trade; but since it is an affair that you propose to me, — for you propose an affair to me, do you not? — "

"A superb one, Planchet."

"But as you propose to me an affair, I have the right to discuss it."

"Discuss it, Planchet; out of discussion light is born."

"Well, then, since I have Monsieur's permission, I will tell him that there is yonder, in the first place, the Parliament."

"Well, next?"

"And then the army."

"Good! Do you see anything else?"

"And then the nation."

"Is that all?"

"The nation, which consented to the overthrow and death of the late king, the father of this, and which will not be willing to belie its acts."

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, "you reason like a cheese! The nation — the nation is tired of these gentlemen who give themselves barbarous names and sing psalms to it. Chant for chant, my dear Planchet; I have remarked that nations prefer singing a merry

chant to the plain chant. Remember the Fronde; what did they sing in those times? Well, those were good times."

"Not too good, — not too good! I was near being hung in those times."

"Well, but you were not?"

"No."

"And you laid the foundation of your fortune in the midst of all those songs?"

"That is true."

"You have nothing to say against them, then?"

"Well, I return, then, to the army and the Parliament."

"I say that I borrow twenty thousand livres of M. Planchet, and that I put twenty thousand livres of my own to it, and with these forty thousand livres I raise an army."

Planchet clasped his hands; he saw that D'Artagnan was in earnest, and, in good truth, he believed that his master had lost his senses.

"An army! — ah, Monsieur," said he, with his most agreeable smile, for fear of irritating the madman and rendering him furious, "an army! — large?"

"Of forty men," said D'Artagnan.

"Forty against forty thousand! that is not enough. I know very well that you, M. d'Artagnan, alone are equal to a thousand men; but where are we to find thirty-nine men equal to you? Or, if we could find them, who would furnish you with money to pay them?"

"Not bad, Planchet. Ah, the devil! you play the courtier."

"No, Monsieur, I speak what I think; and that is exactly why I say that in the first pitched battle you fight with your forty men I am very much afraid — "

"Therefore I will fight no pitched battles, my dear

Planchet," said the Gascon, laughing. "We have very fine examples in antiquity of skilful retreats and marches, which consisted in avoiding the enemy instead of attacking them. You should know that, Planchet, who commanded the Parisians the day on which they ought to have fought against the Musketeers, and who so well calculated marches and countermarches, that you never left the Palais-Royal."

Planchet could not forbear laughing. "It is plain," replied he, "that if your forty men conceal themselves, and are not unskilful, they may hope not to be beaten; but you propose to yourself some result, do you not?"

"No doubt. This then, in my opinion, is the plan to be proceeded upon in order to replace quickly his Majesty Charles II. on his throne."

"Good!" said Planchet, redoubling his attention; "let us see your plan. But, in the first place, it appears to me we are forgetting something."

"What is that?"

"We have set aside the nation, which prefers singing merry songs to psalms, and the army, which we will not fight; but the Parliament remains, and that seldom sings."

"And it does not fight, either. How is it, Planchet, that an intelligent man like you should take any heed of a set of brawlers who call themselves Rumps and Barebones? The Parliament does not trouble me at all, Planchet."

"Since it does not trouble you, Monsieur, let us pass on."

"Yes, and arrive at the result. You remember Cromwell, Planchet?"

"I have heard a great deal of talk about him."

"He was a rough soldier."

"And a terrible eater, moreover."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, at one gulp, he swallowed all England."

"Well, Planchet, the evening before the day on which he swallowed England, if any one had swallowed Cromwell?"

"Oh, Monsieur, that is one of the first axioms of mathematics, that the container must be greater than the contained."

"Very well! You see our affair, Planchet."

"But Cromwell is dead, and his container is now the tomb."

"My dear Planchet, I see with pleasure that you have not only become a mathematician, but a philosopher."

"Monsieur, in my grocery business I use much printed paper, and that instructs me."

"Bravo! You know, then, in that case — for you have not learnt mathematics and philosophy without a little history — that after this Cromwell so great, there came one who was very little."

"Yes; he was named Richard, and he has done as you have, M. d'Artagnan, — he has given in his resignation."

"Very well said, — very well! After the great man who is dead, after the little one who gave in his resignation, there has come a third. This one is named Monk. He is an able general, considering that he has never fought a battle; he is a skilful diplomatist, considering that he never speaks in public, and that, having to say 'Good-day' to a man, he meditates twelve hours, and ends by saying 'Good-night,' — which makes people exclaim, 'Miracle!' seeing that it falls out correctly."

"That is rather strong," said Planchet; "but I know another polite man who resembles him very much."

"Mazarin, you mean?"

"Himself."

"You are right, Planchet; only, Mazarin does not aspire to the throne of France, and that changes everything, you see. Well, this Monk, who has England ready-roasted in his plate, and who is already opening his mouth to swallow it,— this Monk, who says to the people of Charles II., and to Charles II. himself, '*Nescio vos*'"

"I don't understand English," said Planchet.

"Yes, but I understand it," said D'Artagnan. "'*Nescio vos*' means 'I do not know you.' This Monk, the most important man in England, when he shall have swallowed it—"

"Well?" asked Planchet.

"Well, my friend, I will go over yonder, and with my forty men I will carry him off, pack him up, and bring him into France, where two modes of proceeding present themselves to my dazzled eyes."

"Oh! and to mine too," cried Planchet, transported with enthusiasm. "We will put him in a cage and show him for money."

"Well, Planchet, that is a third plan of which I had not thought, and which you have discovered,—you yourself."

"Do you think it a good one?"

"Yes, certainly; but I think mine better."

"Let us see yours, then."

"In the first place, I will set a ransom on him."

"Of how much?"

"*Peste!* a fellow like that must be well worth a hundred thousand crowns."

"Yes, yes!"

"You see, then,—in the first place, a ransom of a hundred thousand crowns."

"Or else —"

"Or else — which is much better — I deliver him up to King Charles, who, having no longer either a general or an army to fear, nor a diplomatist to trick him, will restore himself, and when once restored will pay down to me the hundred thousand crowns in question. That is the idea I have formed; what do you say to it, Planchet?"

"Magnificent, Monsieur!" cried Planchet, trembling with emotion. "How did you conceive that idea?"

"It came to me one morning on the banks of the Loire, while our beloved king Louis XIV. was snivelling over the hand of Mademoiselle de Mancini."

"Monsieur, I declare the idea is sublime. But —"

"Ah! there is a *but?*"

"Permit me! But this is a little like the skin of that fine bear, you know, that they were about to sell, but which it was necessary to take from the back of the bear, who was still alive. Now, to take Monk, there will be a bit of a scuffle, I should think."

"No doubt; but as I shall raise an army —"

"Yes, yes, — I understand, *parbleu!* — an exploit. Yes, then, Monsieur, you will triumph, for no one equals you in that sort of adventure."

"I certainly am lucky in them," said D'Artagnan, with a proud simplicity. "You know that if for this affair I had my dear Athos, my brave Porthos, and my cunning Aramis, the business would be settled; but they are all lost, as it appears, and nobody knows where to find them. I will do it, then, alone. Now, do you find the business good, and the investment advantageous?"

"Too much, — too much."

"How can that be?"

"Because fine things never reach the point expected."

"This is infallible, Planchet, and the proof is that I

undertake it. It will be for you a tolerably pretty gain, and for me a very interesting stroke. It will be said, 'Such was the old age of M. d'Artagnan;' and I shall hold a place in stories, and even in history itself, Planchet. I am greedy of honor."

"Monsieur," cried Planchet, "when I think that it is here, in my home, in the midst of my sugar, my prunes, and my cinnamon, that this gigantic project is ripened, my shop seems a palace to me."

"Beware, beware, Planchet! If the least report of this escapes, there is the Bastille for both of us. Beware, my friend; for this is a plot we are hatching. Monk is the ally of Mazarin, — beware!"

"Monsieur, when a man has had the honor to belong to you, he knows nothing of fear; and when he has the advantage of being bound up in interests with you, he holds his tongue."

"Very well; that is more your affair than mine, seeing that in a week I shall be in England."

"Begone, begone, Monsieur, — the sooner the better."

"Is the money then ready?"

"It will be to-morrow; to-morrow you shall receive it from my own hands. Will you have gold or silver?"

"Gold; that is most convenient. But how are we going to arrange this? Let us see."

"Oh, good Lord! in the simplest way possible. You shall give me a receipt; that is all."

"No, no," said D'Artagnan, warmly; "we must preserve order in all things."

"That is likewise my opinion; but with you, M. d'Artagnan —"

"And if I should die yonder — if I am killed by a musket-ball — if I should burst with drinking beer?"

"Monsieur, I beg you to believe that in that case I

should be so much afflicted at your death, that I should think nothing about the money."

"Thank you, Planchet; but that will not do. We will, like two lawyers' clerks, draw up together an agreement, a sort of act, which may be called a deed of partnership."

"Willingly, Monsieur."

"I know it is difficult to draw such a thing up, but we will try."

"Let us try, then;" and Planchet went in search of a pen, ink, and paper. D'Artagnan took the pen, dipped it in the ink, and wrote:—

"Between Messire d'Artagnan, ex-lieutenant of the king's Musketeers, at present residing in the Rue Tiquetonne, Hôtel de la Chevrette, and the Sieur Planchet, grocer, residing in the Rue des Lombards, at the sign of the Pilon d'Or, it has been agreed as follows: A partnership, with a capital of forty thousand livres, is formed for the purpose of carrying out an idea conceived by M. d'Artagnan. The Sieur Planchet, who is acquainted with this idea of M. d'Artagnan, and who approves of it in all points, will place twenty thousand livres in the hands of M. d'Artagnan. He will require neither repayment nor interest before the return of M. d'Artagnan from a voyage he is about to make into England. On his part, M. d'Artagnan undertakes to find twenty thousand livres, which he will join to the twenty thousand already laid down by the Sieur Planchet. He will employ the said sum of forty thousand livres as shall seem to him good, but still in an undertaking which is described below. On the day in which M. d'Artagnan shall have re-established, by whatever means, his Majesty King Charles II. upon the throne of England, he will pay into the hands of M. Planchet the sum of—"

"The sum of a hundred and fifty thousand livres," said Planchet, innocently, perceiving that D'Artagnan hesitated.

"Oh, the devil, no!" said D'Artagnan, "the division cannot be made by half; that would not be just."

"And yet, Monsieur, we each lay down half," objected Planchet, timidly.

"Yes; but listen to this clause, my dear Planchet, and if you do not find it equitable in every respect when it is written, well, we can scratch it out again:—

"'Nevertheless, as M. d'Artagnan brings to the association, besides his capital of twenty thousand livres, his time, his idea, his industry, and his skin, — things which he appreciates strongly, particularly the last, — M. d'Artagnan will keep, of the three hundred thousand livres, two hundred thousand livres for himself, which will make his share two thirds.'"

"Very well," said Planchet.

"Is it just?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Perfectly just, Monsieur."

"And you will be contented with a hundred thousand livres?"

"*Peste!* I think so. A hundred thousand for twenty thousand!"

"And in a month, understand."

"How, in a month?"

"Yes, I only ask one month."

"Monsieur," said Planchet, generously, "I will give you six weeks."

"Thank you," replied the musketeer, civilly; after which the two partners re-perused their deed.

"That is perfect, Monsieur," said Planchet; "and the late M. Coquenard, the first husband of Madame la Baronne du Vallon, could not have done it better."

"Do you find it so? Let us sign it, then;" and both affixed their signatures.

"In this fashion," said D'Artagnan, "I shall have no obligations to any one."

"But I shall be under obligations to you," said Planchet.

"No; for whatever store I set by it, Planchet, I may lose my skin yonder, and you will lose all. *Apropos — peste!* — that makes me think of the principal, an indispensable clause. I will write it: —

"'In the case of M. d'Artagnan succumbing in this enterprise, liquidation will be considered made, and the Sieur Planchet will give quittance from that moment to the shade of Messire d'Artagnan, for the twenty thousand livres paid by him into the treasury of the said partnership.'"

This last clause made Planchet knit his brows a little; but when he saw the brilliant eye, the muscular hand, the back so supple and strong, of his associate, he regained his courage, and, without regret, at once added another stroke to his signature. D'Artagnan did the same. Thus was drawn the first deed of partnership known; perhaps such things have been abused a little since, both in form and principle.

"Now," said Planchet, pouring out the last glass of Anjou wine for D'Artagnan, — "now go to sleep, my dear master."

"No," replied D'Artagnan; "for the most difficult part now remains to be done, and I will think over that difficult part."

"Bah!" said Planchet; "I have so great confidence in you, M. d'Artagnan, that I would not give my hundred thousand livres for ninety thousand livres down."

"And devil take me if I don't think you are right! Upon which D'Artagnan took a candle and went up to his bedroom.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN PREPARES TO TRAVEL FOR THE HOUSE OF PLANCHET AND COMPANY.

D'ARTAGNAN reflected to such good purpose during the night, that his plan was settled by morning. "This is it," said he, sitting up in bed, supporting his elbow on his knee and his chin in his hand, — "this is it. I will seek out forty steady, firm men, recruited among people a little compromised, but having habits of discipline. I will promise them five hundred livres for a month if they return; nothing if they do not return, or half for their kindred. As to food and lodging, that concerns the English, who have beasts in their pastures, bacon in their bacon-racks, fowls in their poultry-yards, and corn in their barns. I will present myself to General Monk with my little body of troops. He will receive me. I shall gain his confidence, and will abuse it as soon as possible."

But without going further, D'Artagnan shook his head and interrupted himself. "No," said he; "I should not dare to relate this to Athos; the scheme is therefore not honorable. I must use violence," continued he, — "very certainly I must, but without compromising my loyalty. With forty men I will traverse the country as a partisan. But if I fall in with, not forty thousand English, as Planchet said, but purely and simply with four hundred, I shall be beaten. Supposing that among my forty war-

riors there should be found at least ten stupid ones, — ten who will allow themselves to be killed one after the other, through mere stupidity? No; it is, in fact, impossible to find forty men to be depended upon, — that is out of the question. I must learn how to be contented with thirty. With ten men less I should have the right of avoiding any encounter at arms, on account of the small number of my people; and if the encounter should take place, my choice is much more certain with thirty men than forty. Besides, I should save five thousand francs, — that is to say, the eighth of my capital; that is worth the trial. That is to say, I will have thirty men. I will divide them into three bands, — we will spread ourselves about over the country, with instructions for reunion at a given moment; in this fashion, ten by ten, we should excite no suspicion, we should pass unperceived. Yes, yes, thirty, — that is a magic number. There are three tens, — three, that divine number! And then, truly, a company of thirty men, when all together, will look rather imposing. Ah! stupid wretch that I am!" continued D'Artagnan, "I want thirty horses. That is ruinous. Where the devil was my head when I forgot the horses? We cannot, however, think of striking such a blow without horses. Well, so be it, that sacrifice must be made; we can get the horses in the country, — they are not bad, besides. But I forgot — *peste!* Three bands, — that necessitates three leaders: there is the difficulty. Of the three commanders I have already one, — that is myself; yes, but the two others will of themselves cost almost as much money as all the rest of the troop. No; decidedly I must have but one lieutenant. In that case, then, I should reduce my troop to twenty men. I know very well that twenty men is but very little; but since with thirty I was determined not to seek to come

to blows, I should do so more carefully still with twenty. Twenty, — that is a round number; that, besides, reduces the number of the horses by ten, which is a consideration; and then, with a good lieutenant — *Mordioux!* what things patience and calculation are! Was I not going to embark with forty men, and I have now reduced them to twenty for an equal success? Ten thousand livres saved at one stroke, and more safety; that is well! Now, then, let us see; we have nothing to do but to find this lieutenant, — let him be found, then; and after — ? That is not so easy; he must be brave and good, a second myself. Yes; but a lieutenant must have my secret, and as that secret is worth a million, and I shall only pay my man a thousand livres, fifteen hundred at the most, my man will sell the secret to Monk. *Mordioux!* no lieutenant. Besides, this man, were he as mute as a disciple of Pythagoras, — this man would be sure to have in the troop some favorite soldier, whom he would make his sergeant; the sergeant would penetrate the secret of the lieutenant, in case the latter should be honest and unwilling to sell it. Then the sergeant, less honest and less ambitious, will give up the whole for fifty thousand livres. Come, come! that is impossible. Decidedly the lieutenant is impossible. But then I can have no division; I cannot divide my troop into two, and act upon two points at once, without another self, who — But what is the use of acting upon two points, as we have only one man to take? What can be the good to weaken a corps by placing the right here, and the left there? A single corps — *mordioux!* a single one, and that commanded by D'Artagnan. Very well. But twenty men marching in one band are suspected by everybody; twenty horsemen must not be seen marching together, or a company will be detached against them,

and the countersign will be required; which company, upon seeing the embarrassment of the troop in giving it, would shoot M. d'Artagnan and his men like so many rabbits. I reduce myself, then, to ten men; in this fashion I shall act simply and with unity; I shall be forced to be prudent, which is half success in an affair of the kind I am undertaking; a greater number might, perhaps, have drawn me into some folly. Ten horses are not many either to buy or take A capital idea; what tranquillity it infuses into my mind! No more suspicions, no more countersigns, no more dangers! Ten men, — they are valets or clerks. Ten men, leading ten horses laden with merchandise of whatever kind, are tolerated, well received everywhere. Ten men travel on account of the house of Planchet & Co., of France: nothing can be said against that. These ten men, clothed like manufacturers, have a good cutlass or a good mousqueton at their saddle-bow, and a good pistol in the holster. They never allow themselves to be uneasy, because they have no evil designs. They are perhaps, at bottom, a little disposed to be smugglers, but what harm is in that? Smuggling is not, like polygamy, a hanging offence. The worst that can happen to us is the confiscation of our merchandise. Our merchandise confiscated — a fine affair that! Come, come! it is a superb plan. Ten men only — ten men, whom I will engage for my service; ten men, who shall be as resolute as forty who would cost me four times as much, and to whom, for greater security, I will never open my mouth as to my designs, and to whom I shall only say, 'My friends, there is a blow to be struck.' Things being after this fashion, Satan will be very malicious if he plays me one of his tricks. Fifteen thousand livres saved — that 's superb — out of twenty!"

Thus fortified by his laborious calculations, D'Artagnan stopped at this plan, and determined to change nothing in it. He had already, on a list furnished by his inexhaustible memory, ten men illustrious among the seekers of adventures, ill treated by fortune, or not on good terms with justice. Upon this D'Artagnan rose, and instantly set off on the search, telling Planchet not to expect him at breakfast, and perhaps not at dinner. A day and a half spent in rummaging among certain cabins in Paris sufficed for his recruiting; and, without allowing his adventurers to communicate with each other, he had picked up and got together, in less than thirty hours, a charming collection of ill-looking faces, speaking a French less pure than the English they were about to attempt. These men were, for the most part, Guards, whose merit D'Artagnan had had an opportunity of appreciating in various encounters, and whom drunkenness, unlucky sword-thrusts, unexpected winnings at play, or the economical reforms of Mazarin, had forced to seek shade and solitude, those two great consolers of irritated and chafed spirits. They bore upon their countenances and in their vestments the traces of the heartaches they had undergone. Some had their visages scarred, — all had their clothes in rags. D'Artagnan comforted the most needy of these fraternal miserables by a prudent distribution of the crowns of the partnership; then having taken care that these crowns should be employed in the physical improvement of the troop, he appointed a rendezvous with them in the North of France, between Berghes and Saint-Omer. Six days were allowed as the utmost term; and D'Artagnan was sufficiently acquainted with the good will, the good humor, and the comparative probity of these illustrious recruits, to be certain that not one of them would fail in his appointment. These

orders given, this rendezvous fixed, he went to bid farewell to Planchet, who asked news of his army. D'Artagnan did not think proper to inform him of the reduction he had made in his forces. He feared he should make an abatement in the confidence of his associate by such an avowal. Planchet was delighted to learn that the army was levied, and that he, Planchet, should find himself a kind of half king, who from his throne-counter kept in pay a body of troops destined to make war against perfidious Albion, that enemy of all true French hearts. Planchet paid down, in double-louis, twenty thousand livres to D'Artagnan, on the part of himself (Planchet), and twenty thousand livres more, still in double-louis, on account of D'Artagnan. D'Artagnan placed each of the sums in a bag, and weighing a bag in each hand, "This money is very embarrassing, my dear Planchet," said he. "Do you know this weighs more than thirty pounds?"

"Bah! your horse will carry that like a feather."

D'Artagnan shook his head. "Don't tell such things to me, Planchet; a horse overloaded with thirty pounds, in addition to the rider and his portmanteau, cannot cross a river so easily,—cannot leap over a wall or a ditch so lightly; and the horse failing, the horseman fails. It is true that you, Planchet, who have served in the infantry, may not be aware of all that."

"Then what is to be done, Monsieur?" said Planchet, greatly embarrassed.

"Listen to me," said D'Artagnan. "I will pay my army on its return home. Keep my half of twenty thousand livres, which you can make use of during that time."

"And my half?" said Planchet.

"I will take that with me."

"Your confidence does me honor," said Planchet; "but suppose you should not return?"

"That is possible, though not very probable. Then, Planchet, in case I should not return — give me a pen; I will make my will." D'Artagnan took a pen and some paper, and wrote upon a plain sheet: —

"I, D'Artagnan, possess twenty thousand livres, laid up, sou by sou, during thirty years that I have been in the service of his Majesty the King of France. I leave five thousand to Athos, five thousand to Porthos, and five thousand to Aramis, that they may give the said sums in my name and their own to my young friend Raoul, Vicomte de Bragelonne. I give the remaining five thousand to Planchet, that he may distribute the fifteen thousand with less regret among my friends. With which purpose I sign these presents. — D'ARTAGNAN."

Planchet appeared very curious to know what D'Artagnan had written.

"Here," said the musketeer, "read it."

On reading the last lines the tears came into Planchet's eyes. "You think, then, that I would not have given the money without that? Then I will have none of your five thousand francs."

D'Artagnan smiled. "Accept it, accept it, Planchet; and in that way you will only lose fifteen thousand francs instead of twenty thousand, and you will not be tempted to disregard the signature of your master and friend in seeking how to lose nothing at all."

How well that dear M. d'Artagnan was acquainted with the hearts of men and of grocers! They who have pronounced Don Quixote mad because he rode out to the conquest of an empire with nobody but Sancho his squire, and they who have pronounced Sancho mad because he accompanied his master in his attempt to conquer the

said empire, — they certainly will have no hesitation in extending the same judgment to D'Artagnan and Planchet. And yet the first passed for one of the most subtle spirits among the astute minds of the court of France. As to the second, he had acquired by good right the reputation of having one of the longest heads among the grocers of the Rue des Lombards; consequently of Paris, consequently of France. Now, to consider these two men from the point of view in which you would consider other men, and the means by the aid of which they contemplated to restore a monarch to his throne, comparatively with other means, the shallowest brains of the country where brains are most shallow must have revolted against the presumptuous madness of the lieutenant and the stupidity of his associate. Fortunately D'Artagnan was not a man to listen to the idle talk of those around him, or to the comments that were made on himself. He had adopted the motto, "Act well, and let people talk." Planchet, on his part, had adopted this: "Act, and say nothing." It resulted from this, that, according to the custom of all superior geniuses, these two men flattered themselves, *intra pectus*, with being in the right against all who found fault with them.

As a beginning D'Artagnan set out in the finest of possible weather, without a cloud in the heavens, — without a cloud on his mind, joyous and strong, calm and decided, great in his resolution, and consequently carrying with him a tenfold dose of that potent fluid which the shocks of mind cause to spring from the nerves, and which procure for the human machine a force and an influence of which future ages will render, according to all probability, an account more arithmetically than we can possibly do at present. He was again, as in times past, in that same road fertile of adventures which had led him to Boulogne, and which he was now travelling for the fourth

time. It appeared to him that he could almost recognize the trace of his own steps upon the road, and that of his fist upon the doors of the hostelries; his memory, always active and present, brought back that youth which had not, thirty years before, belied either his great heart or his wrist of steel. What a rich nature was that of this man! He had all passions, all defects, all weaknesses; and the spirit of contradiction, familiar to his understanding, changed all these imperfections into corresponding qualities. D'Artagnan, thanks to his ever-active imagination, was afraid of a shadow; and ashamed of being afraid, he marched straight up to that shadow, and then became extravagant in his bravery, if the danger proved to be real. Thus everything in him was emotion, and therefore enjoyment. He loved the society of others, but never became tired of his own; and more than once, if he could have been observed when he was alone, he might have been seen laughing at the jokes he related to himself, or the tricks his imagination created just five minutes before ennui might overtake him. D'Artagnan was not perhaps so gay this time as he would have been with the prospect of finding some good friends at Calais, instead of that of joining the ten scamps there. Melancholy, however, did not visit him above once a day; and he received about five visits from that sombre deity before he got sight of the sea at Boulogne, and these visits were indeed but short. But when once D'Artagnan found himself near the field of action, all other feeling but that of confidence disappeared never to return. From Boulogne he followed the coast to Calais. Calais was the place of general rendezvous, and at Calais he had named to each of his recruits the hostelry of the Grand Monarque, where living was not extravagant, where sailors messed, and where men of the sword, with sheath of leather be it understood, found

lodging, table, food, and all the comforts of life, for thirty sous per diem. D'Artagnan proposed to himself to take them by surprise *in flagrante delicto* of wandering life, and to judge by the first appearance if he could reckon upon them as trusty companions.

He arrived at Calais at half-past four in the afternoon.

CHAPTER XXII.

D'ARTAGNAN TRAVELS FOR THE HOUSE OF PLANCHET AND COMPANY.

THE hostelry of the Grand Monarque was situated in a little street parallel to the port, but not opening out upon the port itself. Some lanes cut — as steps cut the two parallels of the ladder — the two great straight lines of the port and the street. By these lanes passengers came suddenly from the port into the street, and from the street on to the port. D'Artagnan, arrived at the port, took one of these lanes, and came out unexpectedly in front of the hostelry of the Grand Monarque. The moment was well chosen, and might remind D'Artagnan of his start in life at the hostelry of the Franc-Meunier at Meung. Some sailors who had been playing at dice had started a quarrel, and were threatening one another furiously. The host, hostess, and two lads were watching with anxiety the circle of these angry gamblers, from the midst of which war seemed ready to break forth, bristling with knives and hatchets. The play, nevertheless, was continued. A stone bench was occupied by two men, who appeared thence to watch the door; four tables, placed at the back of the common chamber, were occupied by eight other individuals. Neither the men at the door nor those at the tables took any part in the play or the quarrel. D'Artagnan recognized his ten men in these cold, indifferent spectators. The quarrel went on increasing. Every passion has, like the sea, its tide which rises

and falls. Arrived at the climax of passion, one sailor overturned the table and the money which was upon it. The table fell, and the money rolled about. In an instant all belonging to the hostelry threw themselves upon the stakes, and many a piece of silver was picked up by people who stole away while the sailors were scuffling with one another.

The two men on the bench and the eight at the tables, although they seemed perfect strangers to one another, — these ten men alone, we say, appeared to have agreed to remain impassive amidst the cries of fury and the chinking of money. Two only contented themselves with repulsing with their feet combatants who came under their table. Two others, rather than take part in this disturbance, buried their hands in their pockets; and another two jumped upon the table they occupied, as do people surprised by a freshet, to avoid being submerged by overflowing water.

"Come, come," said D'Artagnan to himself, having lost none of the details we have related, "this is a very fair gathering, — circumspect, calm, accustomed to disturbance, acquainted with blows! *Peste!* I have been lucky."

All at once his attention was called to a particular part of the room. The two men who had repulsed the strugglers with their feet, were assailed with abuse by the sailors, who had become reconciled. One of them, half drunk with passion and quite drunk with beer, came, in a menacing manner, to demand of the shorter of these two sages, by what right he had touched with his foot creatures of the good God, who were not dogs. And while putting this question, in order to make it more direct, he applied his great fist to the nose of D'Artagnan's recruit. This man became pale, but it was not discernible whether his paleness arose from anger or from fear;

seeing which, the sailor concluded it was from fear, and raised his fist with the manifest intention of letting it fall upon the head of the stranger. But the threatened man, without appearing to move, dealt the sailor such a severe blow in the stomach as sent him rolling to the other side of the room with frightful cries. At the same instant, rallied by the *esprit de corps*, all the comrades of the conquered man fell upon the conqueror. The latter, with the same coolness of which he had given proof, without committing the imprudence of touching his arms, took up a beer-pot with a pewter lid, and knocked down two or three of his assailants; then, as he was about to yield to numbers, the seven other silent men at the tables, who had not stirred, perceived that their cause was at stake, and came to the rescue. At the same time the two indifferent spectators at the door turned round with frowning brows, indicating their evident intention of taking the enemy in the rear, if the enemy did not cease their aggressions. The host, his helpers, and two watchmen who were passing, and who from curiosity had penetrated too far into the room, were confounded in the tumult and loaded with blows. The Parisians hit like Cyclops, with a solidity and skill delightful to behold At length, obliged to beat a retreat before numbers, they formed an intrenchment behind the great table, which they raised by main force, while the two others armed themselves each with a trestle, and, using it like a great sledge-hammer, knocked down at a blow eight sailors upon whose heads they had brought their monstrous catapult to bear. The floor was already strewn with wounded, and the room filled with cries and dust, when D'Artagnan, satisfied with the test, advanced, sword in hand; and striking with the pommel every head that came in his way. he uttered a vigorous *Holloa!* which put an instantaneous

end to the conflict. A great back-flood from the centre to the sides of the room directly took place, so that D'Artagnan found himself isolated and master of the situation.

"What is all this about?" then demanded he of the assembly, with the majestic tone of Neptune pronouncing the *Quos ego*.

At the very instant, at the first sound of his voice, to carry on the Virgilian metaphor, D'Artagnan's recruits, each recognizing his sovereign lord, discontinued at the same time their anger, their plank-fighting, and trestle blows. On their side, the sailors, seeing that long, naked sword, that martial air, and the agile arm which came to the rescue of their enemies, in the person of a man who seemed accustomed to command,— on their part, the sailors picked up their wounded and their pitchers. The Parisians wiped their brows, and viewed their leader with respect. D'Artagnan was loaded with thanks by the host of the Grand Monarque. He received them like a man who knows that nothing is being offered that does not belong to him, and then said he would go and walk upon the port, till supper was ready. Immediately each of the recruits, who understood the summons, took his hat, brushed the dust off his clothes, and followed D'Artagnan. But D'Artagnan, while observing, examining everything, took care not to stop. He directed his course towards the dune; and the ten men — surprised at finding themselves going in the same path, uneasy at seeing on their right, on their left, and behind them, companions upon whom they had not reckoned — followed him, casting furtive glances at one another. It was not till he had arrived at the hollow part of the deepest dune that D'Artagnan, smiling at seeing their shyness, turned towards them, making a friendly sign with his hand.

"Eh! come, come, Messieurs," said he, "let us not devour one another; you are made to live together, to understand one another in all respects, and not to devour one another."

Instantly all hesitation ceased; the men breathed as if they had been taken out of a coffin, and examined one another quietly. After this examination they turned their eyes towards their leader, who, long acquainted with the art of speaking to men of that class, improvised the following little speech, pronounced with an energy truly Gascon: —

"Messieurs, you all know who I am. I have engaged you knowing you are brave, and willing to associate you with me in a glorious enterprise. Figure to yourselves that in laboring for me you labor for the king. I only warn you that if you allow anything of this supposition to appear, I shall be forced to crack your skulls immediately, in the manner most convenient to me. You are not ignorant, Messieurs, that State secrets are like a mortal poison: as long as that poison is in its box and the box closed, it is not injurious; out of the box it kills. Now draw near, and you shall know as much of this secret as I am able to tell you." All drew close to him with an expression of curiosity. "Approach," continued D'Artagnan, "and let not the bird which passes over our heads, the rabbit which sports in the dunes, the fish which leaps from the waters, hear us. Our business is to learn and to report to Monsieur the superintendant of finance to what extent English smuggling is injurious to the French merchants. I will enter every place and will see everything. We are poor Picard fishermen, thrown upon the coast by a storm. It is certain that we must sell fish, neither more nor less, like true fishermen. Only people might guess who we are, and might molest us; it is therefore

necessary that we should be in a condition to defend ourselves. And this is why I have selected men of spirit and courage. We will lead a steady life, and we shall not incur much danger, seeing that we have behind us a powerful protector, thanks to whom no embarrassment is possible. One thing alone annoys me; but I hope, after a short explanation, you will relieve me from that difficulty. The thing which annoys me is taking with me a crew of stupid fishermen, who will be very much in the way; while if, by chance, there were among you any who have seen the sea —"

"Oh! let not that trouble you," said one of the recruits; "I was a prisoner among the pirates of Tunis three years, and can manœuvre a boat like an admiral."

"See," said D'Artagnan, "what an admirable thing is chance!" D'Artagnan pronounced these words with an indefinable tone of feigned simplicity; for D'Artagnan knew very well that the victim of pirates was an old corsair, and he had engaged him in consequence of that knowledge. But D'Artagnan never said more than there was occasion for saying, in order to leave people in doubt. He was satisfied with the explanation, and welcomed the effect, without appearing to be preoccupied with the cause.

"And I," said a second, — "I, by chance, had an uncle who directed the works of the port of La Rochelle. When quite a child, I played about the boats, and I know how to handle an oar or a sail as well as the best ocean sailor."

The last did not lie much more than the first, for he had rowed on board his Majesty's galleys six years, at Ciotat. Two others were more frank: they confessed honestly that they had served on board a vessel as soldiers on punishment, and did not blush at it. D'Ar-

tagnan found himself, then, the leader of six soldiers and four sailors, having at once a land army and a sea force; which would have carried the pride of Planchet to its height, if Planchet had known the details.

Nothing was now left but the general orders, and D'Artagnan gave them with precision. He enjoined his men to be ready to set out for the Hague,— some following the coast which leads to Breskens, others the road to Antwerp. The rendezvous was given, by calculating each day's march, at fifteen days from that time, upon the chief place at the Hague. D'Artagnan recommended his men to go in couples, as they liked best, from sympathy. He himself selected from among those with the least hanging look, two guards whom he had formerly known, and whose only faults were being drunkards and gamblers. These men had not entirely lost all ideas of civilization, and under proper habiliments their hearts would have renewed their beatings. D'Artagnan, not to occasion jealousy among the others, made the rest go forward. He kept his two selected ones, clothed them from his own kit, and set out with them. It was to these two, whom he seemed to honor with an absolute confidence, that D'Artagnan made a pretended avowal, designed to secure the success of his expedition. He confessed to them that the object was not to learn to what extent the French merchants were injured by English smuggling, but to learn how far French smuggling could annoy English trade. These men appeared convinced; they were effectively so. D'Artagnan was quite sure that at the first debauch, when thoroughly drunk, one of the two would divulge the secret to the whole band. His play appeared to him infallible.

A fortnight after all we have said had taken place at Calais, the whole troop assembled at the Hague. Then

D'Artagnan perceived that all his men, with remarkable intelligence, had already disguised themselves as sailors, more or less ill-treated by the sea. D'Artagnan left them to sleep in a cabin in Newkerke Street, while he lodged comfortably upon the Grand Canal. He learned that the King of England had come back to his old ally William II. of Nassau, Stadtholder of Holland. He learned also that the refusal of Louis XIV. had a little cooled the protection afforded him up to that time, and in consequence he had gone to reside in a little village house at Scheveningen, situated in the dunes, on the seashore, about a league from the Hague. There, it was said, the unfortunate banished king consoled himself in his exile, by looking, with the melancholy peculiar to the princes of his race, at that immense North Sea, which separated him from his England, as it had formerly separated Marie Stuart from France. There, behind the trees of the beautiful wood of Scheveningen, on the fine sand upon which grows the golden broom of the dune, Charles II. vegetated as it did, — more unfortunate than it, for he had life and thought, and he hoped and despaired by turns.

D'Artagnan went once as far as Scheveningen, in order to be certain that all was true that was said of the king. He beheld Charles II., pensive and alone, coming out of a little door opening into the wood, and walking on the beach in the setting sun, without even attracting the attention of the fishermen who, on their return in the evening, drew, like the ancient mariners of the Archipelago, their barks up upon the sand of the shore. D'Artagnan recognized the king; he saw him fix his melancholy look upon the immense extent of the waters, and absorb upon his pale countenance the red rays of the sun already cut by the black line of the horizon. Then Charles returned to his isolated abode, still alone, still slow and sad, amus-

ing himself with making the friable and moving sand creak beneath his feet. That very evening D'Artagnan hired for a thousand livres a fishing-boat worth four thousand. He paid the thousand livres down, and deposited the three thousand with a burgomaster, after which he embarked without their being seen, and in a dark night, the six men who formed his land army; and with the rising tide, at three o'clock in the morning, he got into the open sea, manœuvring ostensibly with the four others, and depending upon the science of his galley slave as upon that of the first pilot of the port.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN WHICH THE AUTHOR, VERY UNWILLINGLY, IS FORCED TO WRITE A LITTLE HISTORY.

WHILE kings and men were thus occupied with England, which governed itself quite alone, and which, it must be said to its praise, had never been so badly governed, a man upon whom God had fixed his eye and placed his finger, a man predestined to write his name in brilliant letters in the book of history, was pursuing in the face of the world a work full of mystery and audacity. He went on; and no one knew whither he meant to go, although not only England, but France, even Europe, watched him marching with a firm step and lofty head. All that was known of this man we are about to tell. Monk had just declared for the liberty of the Rump Parliament,—a parliament which General Lambert, imitating Cromwell, whose lieutenant he had been, had just blocked up so closely, in order to bring it to his will, that no member, during all the blockade, was able to go out, and only one, Peter Wentworth, had been able to get in. Lambert and Monk,—everything centred in these two men; the first representing military despotism, the second representing pure republicanism. These men were the two sole political representatives of that revolution in which Charles I. had at first lost his crown, and afterwards his head. As regarded Lambert, he did not dissemble his views; he sought to establish a military government, and to be himself the head of that government.

Monk — a rigid republican, some said — wished to maintain the Rump Parliament, that visible though degenerate representative of the republic. Monk — artful and ambitious, said others — wished simply to make of this parliament, which he affected to protect, a solid step by which to mount the throne which Cromwell had made empty, but upon which he had never dared to take his seat. Thus Lambert by persecuting the Parliament, and Monk by declaring for it, had mutually proclaimed themselves enemies of each other. Monk and Lambert, therefore, had at first thought of creating an army each for himself, — Monk in Scotland, where were the Presbyterians and the royalists, that is to say, the malecontents; Lambert in London, where was found, as is always the case, the strongest opposition against the power which was in sight. Monk had pacified Scotland; he had there formed for himself an army, and found an asylum. The one watched the other. Monk knew that the day was not yet come, the day marked by the Lord for a great change; his sword, therefore, appeared glued to the sheath. Inexpugnable in his wild and mountainous Scotland, an absolute general, king of an army of eleven thousand old soldiers, whom he had more than once led on to victory; as well informed, nay, even better, of the affairs of London, than Lambert, who held garrison in the city, — such was the position of Monk, when, at a hundred leagues from London, he declared himself for the parliament. Lambert, on the contrary, as we have said, lived in the capital. That was the centre of all his operations, and he there collected around him all his friends, and all the lower class of the people, always inclined to cherish the enemies of constituted power. It was, then, in London that Lambert learned of the support that, from the frontiers of Scotland, Monk lent to the Parlia-

ment. He judged there was no time to be lost, and that the Tweed was not so far distant from the Thames that an army could not march from one river to the other, especially if well commanded. He knew, besides, that as fast as the soldiers of Monk penetrated into England, they would form on their route that ball of snow, the emblem of the globe of fortune, which is for the ambitious nothing but a step rising without cessation to lift him to the object of his pursuit. He got together, then, his army, formidable at the same time for its character and its numbers, and hastened to meet Monk, who, on his part, like a prudent navigator sailing amid rocks, advanced by very short marches, his nose to the wind, listening to the reports and scenting the air which came from London.

The two armies came in sight of each other near Newcastle. Lambert, arriving first, encamped in the city itself. Monk, always circumspect, stopped where he was, and placed his general quarters at Coldstream, on the Tweed. The sight of Lambert spread joy through the army of Monk, while, on the contrary, the sight of Monk threw disorder into the army of Lambert. It might have been believed that these intrepid warriors, who had made such a noise in the streets of London, had set out with the hopes of meeting no one, and that now, seeing that they had met an army, and that that army hoisted before them not only a standard, but still further, a cause and a principle, — it might have been believed, we say, that these intrepid warriors had begun to reflect that they were less good republicans than the soldiers of Monk, — since the latter supported the Parliament, while Lambert supported nothing, not even himself. As to Monk, if he had had to reflect, or if he did reflect, it must have been after a sad fashion; for history relates — and that modest

dame, it is well known, never lies — for history relates that on the day of his arrival at Coldstream search was made in vain throughout the place for a single sheep.

If Monk had commanded an English army, that would have been enough to bring about a general desertion. But it is not with the Scotch as it is with the English, to whom that fluid flesh which is called blood is a paramount necessity; the Scotch, a poor and sober race, live upon a little barley crushed between two stones, diluted with the water of the fountain, and cooked upon another stone, heated. The Scotch, their distribution of barley being made, cared very little whether there was or was not any meat in Coldstream. Monk, little accustomed to barley-cakes, was hungry; and his staff, at least as hungry as himself, looked with anxiety to the right and left, to know what was being got ready for supper. Monk ordered search to be made; his scouts had, on arriving in the place, found it deserted and the cupboards empty; upon butchers and bakers it was of no use depending in Coldstream. The smallest morsel of bread, then, could not be found for the general's table.

As accounts succeeded one another, all equally unsatisfactory, Monk, seeing terror and discouragement upon every face, declared that he was not hungry; besides, they should eat on the morrow, since Lambert was there probably with the intention of giving battle, and consequently of giving up his provisions if he were beaten in Newcastle, or of delivering the soldiers of Monk from hunger forever if he should be victorious. This consolation was efficacious upon only a very small number; but that was of small importance to Monk, — for Monk was very absolute, under the appearance of the most perfect mildness. Every one, therefore, was obliged to be satisfied, or at least to appear so. Monk, quite as hungry as his people,

but affecting perfect indifference for the absent mutton, cut a fragment of tobacco, half an inch long, from the plug of a sergeant who formed part of his suite, and began to masticate the said fragment, assuring his lieutenants that hunger was a chimera, and that, besides, people were never hungry when they had anything to chew. This pleasantry satisfied some of those who had resisted Monk's first deduction from the neighborhood of Lambert's army; the number of the dissentients diminished then greatly; the guard took their posts, the patrols began, and the general continued his frugal repast under his open tent.

Between his camp and that of the enemy stood an old abbey, of which, at the present day, there only remain some ruins, but which then was in good condition, and was called Newcastle Abbey. It was built upon a vast site, independent at once of the plain and of the river, because it was almost a marsh fed by springs and kept up by rains. Nevertheless, in the midst of these strips of water, covered with long grass, rushes, and reeds, were seen elevated solid spots of ground, consecrated formerly to the kitchen-garden, the park, the pleasure-gardens, and other dependencies of the abbey, — like one of those great sea-spiders, whose body is round, while the claws radiate from this circumference. The kitchen-garden, one of the longest claws of the abbey, extended to the camp of Monk. Unfortunately it was, as we have said, early in June; and the kitchen-garden, being abandoned, offered no resources. Monk had ordered this spot to be guarded, as most subject to surprises. The fires of the enemy's general were plainly to be perceived on the other side of the abbey. But between these fires and the abbey extended the Tweed, unfolding its luminous scales beneath the thick shade of tall green oaks. Monk was perfectly

well acquainted with this position, — Newcastle and its environs having already more than once been his head-quarters. He knew that by day his enemy might without doubt throw a few scouts into these ruins and provoke a skirmish, but that by night he would take care to abstain from such a risk. He felt himself, therefore, in security. Thus his soldiers saw him, after what he boastingly called his supper, — that is to say, after the exercise of mastication already reported by us, — like Napoleon on the eve of Austerlitz, sleeping seated in his rush chair, half beneath the light of his lamp, half beneath the reflection of the moon, which was beginning its ascent into the heavens. This means that it was nearly half-past nine in the evening. All at once Monk was roused from his half-sleep, factitious perhaps, by a troop of soldiers, who came with joyous cries, and kicked the poles of his tent, making a confusion of noises as if on purpose to wake him. There was no need of so much noise; the general opened his eyes quickly.

"Well, my children, what is going on now?" asked the general.

"General!" replied several voices at once, "General! you shall have some supper."

"I have had my supper, gentlemen," replied he, quietly, "and was comfortably digesting it, as you see. But come in, and tell me what brings you hither."

"Good news, General."

"Bah! Has Lambert sent us word that he will fight to-morrow?"

"No; but we have just captured a fishing-boat conveying fish to Newcastle."

"And you have done very wrong, my friends. These gentlemen from London are delicate, they are engaged in

their first service; you will put them sadly out of humor this evening, and to-morrow they will be pitiless. It would really be in good taste to send back to Lambert both his fish and his fishermen, unless — " and the general reflected an instant.

"Tell me," continued he, "what are these fishermen, if you please?"

"Some Picard seamen who were fishing on the coasts of France or Holland, and who have been thrown upon ours by a gale of wind."

"Do any among them speak our language?"

"The leader spoke some few words of English."

The mistrust of the general was awakened in proportion to the information given him. "That is well," said he, "I wish to see these men; bring them to me."

An officer immediately went to fetch them.

"How many are there of them?" continued Monk; "and what is their vessel?"

"There are ten or twelve of them, General, and they were aboard a kind of lugger, as they call it, — Dutch-built, apparently."

"And you say they were carrying fish to Lambert's camp?"

"Yes, General, and they seem to have had good luck in their fishing."

"Humph! We shall see that," said Monk.

At this moment the officer returned, bringing the leader of the fishermen with him. He was a man from fifty to fifty-five years old, but good-looking for his age. He was of middle height, and wore a close-fitting coat of coarse wool, and a cap pulled down over his eyes; a cutlass hung from his belt, and he walked with the hesitation peculiar to sailors, who, never knowing, thanks to the movement of the vessel, whether their foot will be

placed upon the plank or upon nothing, give to every one of their steps a fall as firm as if they were driving a pile. Monk, with an acute and penetrating look, examined the fisherman for some time, while the latter smiled, with that smile, half cunning, half silly, peculiar to French peasants.

"Do you speak English?" asked Monk, in excellent French.

"Ah! but badly, my Lord," replied the fisherman.

This reply was made with the lively and sharp accentuation of the people beyond the Loire, rather than with the slightly drawling accent of the countries on the west and north of France.

"But you do speak it?" persisted Monk, in order to examine this accent once more.

"Eh! we men of the sea," replied the fisherman, "speak a little of all languages."

"Then you are a sea-fisherman?"

"I am at present, my Lord, — a fisherman, and a famous fisherman too. I have taken a barbel that weighs at least thirty pounds, and more than fifty mullets; I have also some little whitings that will fry beautifully."

"You appear to me to have fished more frequently in the Gulf of Gascony than in the Channel," said Monk, smiling.

"Well, I am from the south; but does that prevent me from being a good fisherman, my Lord?"

"Oh! not at all; I will buy your fish. And now speak frankly: for whom did you destine them?"

"My Lord, I will conceal nothing from you. I was going to Newcastle, following the coast, when a party of horsemen who were passing along in an opposite direction made a sign to my bark to turn back to your Honor's camp, under penalty of a discharge of musketry

As I was not armed for fighting," added the fisherman, smiling, "I was forced to submit."

"And why did you go to Lambert's camp in preference to mine?"

"My Lord, I will be frank; will your Lordship permit me?"

"Yes, and even, if there be occasion, shall command you to be so."

"Well, my Lord, I was going to M. Lambert's camp because those gentlemen from the city pay well; while your Scotchmen, Puritans, Presbyterians, Covenanters, or whatever you choose to call them, eat but little, and pay for nothing."

Monk shrugged his shoulders, without, however, being able to refrain from smiling at the same time. "How is it that, being from the south, you come to fish on our coasts?"

"Because I have been fool enough to marry in Picardy."

"Yes; but even Picardy is not England."

"My Lord, man shoves his boat into the sea, but God and the wind do the rest, and drive the boat where they please."

"You had, then, no intention of landing on our coasts?"

"Never."

"And what route were you steering?"

"We were returning from Ostend, where some mackerel have been seen already, when a sharp wind from the south drove us from our course; then, seeing that it was useless to struggle against it, we let it drive us. It then became necessary, not to lose our haul of fish, which was large, to go and sell them at the nearest English port, and that was Newcastle. We were told the opportunity was good, as there was an increase of population in the camp, an increase of population in the city; both we

were told were full of gentlemen, very rich and very hungry. So we steered our course towards Newcastle."

"And your companions, where are they?"

"Oh! my companions have remained on board; they are sailors without the least education."

"While you —" said Monk.

"Oh! I," said the *patron*, laughing, — "I have sailed about with my father; and I know what a sou, a crown, a pistole, a louis, and a double louis is called in all the languages of Europe: my crew therefore listen to me as they would to an oracle, and obey me as if I were an admiral."

"Then it was you who preferred M. Lambert as the best customer?"

"Yes, certainly. And, to be frank, my Lord, was I wrong?"

"You will see that by and by."

"At all events, my Lord, if there is a fault, the fault is mine; and my comrades should not be dealt hardly with on that account."

"This is decidedly an intelligent, sharp fellow," thought Monk. Then, after a few minutes' silence employed in scrutinizing the fisherman, "You come from Ostend, did you not say?" asked the general.

"Yes, my Lord, straight as a line."

"You have then heard some mention of the affairs of the day; for I have no doubt that both in France and Holland they excite interest. What is he doing who calls himself King of England?"

"Oh, my Lord!" cried the fisherman, with loud and expansive frankness, "that is a lucky question, and you could not put it to anybody better than to me, for in truth I can make you a famous reply. Imagine, my Lord, that when putting into Ostend, to sell the few mackerel

we had caught, I saw the ex-king walking on the dunes, waiting for his horses which were to take him to the Hague. He is a rather tall, pale man, with black hair, and somewhat hard-featured. He looks ill, and I don't think the air of Holland agrees with him."

Monk followed with the greatest attention the rapid, heightened, and diffuse conversation of the fisherman, in a language which was not his own, but which, as we have said, he spoke with great facility. The fisherman, on his part, employed sometimes a French word, sometimes an English word, and sometimes a word which appeared not to belong to any language, but was, in truth, pure Gascon. Fortunately his eyes spoke for him, and that so eloquently, that it was possible to lose a word from his mouth, but not a single intention from his eyes. The general appeared more and more satisfied with his examination. "You must have heard that this ex-king, as you call him, was going to the Hague for some purpose?"

"Oh yes, certainly," said the fisherman, "I heard that."

"And what was his purpose?"

"Always the same," said the fisherman. "Must he not always entertain the fixed idea of returning to England?"

"That is true," said Monk, pensively.

"Without reckoning," added the fisherman, "that the stadtholder — you know, my Lord, William II.? — "

"Well?"

"He will assist him with all his power."

"Ah! did you hear that said?"

"No, but I think so."

"You are quite a politician, apparently," said Monk.

"Why, we sailors, my Lord, who are accustomed to study the water and the air — that is to say, the two most mobile things in the world — are seldom deceived as to the rest."

"Now, then," said Monk, changing the conversation, "I am told you are going to provision us."

"I will do my best, my Lord."

"How much do you ask for your fish, in the first place?"

"Not such a fool as to name a price, my Lord."

"Why not?"

"Because my fish is yours."

"By what right?"

"By that of the strongest."

"But my intention is to pay you for it."

"That is very generous of you, my Lord."

"And to their full value — "

"My Lord, I do not ask it."

"What do you ask, then?"

"I only ask to be permitted to go away."

"Where? — to General Lambert's camp?"

"I!" cried the fisherman; "what should I go to Newcastle for, now I have no longer any fish?"

"At all events, listen to me."

"I do, my Lord."

"I will give you counsel."

"How, my Lord? — pay me and give me good counsel likewise? You overwhelm me, my Lord."

Monk looked more earnestly than ever at the fisherman, of whom he still appeared to entertain some suspicion. "Yes, I will pay you, and give you a piece of advice; for the two things are connected. If you return, then, to General Lambert — "

The fisherman made a movement of his head and shoulders, which signified, "If he persist in it, I won't contradict him."

"Do not cross the marsh," continued Monk; "you will have money in your pocket, and there are in the marsh some Scotch ambuscaders I have placed there. Those

people are very intractable; they understand but very little of the language which you speak, although it appears to me to be composed of three languages. They might take from you what I had given you, and on your return to your country you would not fail to say that General Monk has two hands, the one Scotch, and the other English; and that he takes back with the Scotch hand what he has given with the English hand."

"Oh, General, I will go where you like, be sure of that," said the fisherman, with a fear too expressive not to be exaggerated. "I only wish to remain here, if you will allow me to remain."

"I readily believe you," said Monk, with an imperceptible smile, "but I cannot, nevertheless, keep you in my tent."

"I have no such wish, my Lord, and desire only that your Lordship should point out where you will have me posted. Do not trouble yourself about us, — with us a night soon passes away."

"You shall be conducted to your boat."

"As your Lordship pleases. Only, if your Lordship would allow me to be taken back by a carpenter, I should be extremely grateful."

"Why so?"

"Because the gentlemen of your army, in dragging my boat up the river with a cable pulled by their horses, have battered it a little upon the rocks of the shore, so that I have at least two feet of water in my hold, my Lord."

"The greater reason why you should watch your boat, I think."

"My Lord, I am quite at your orders," said the fisherman. "I will empty my baskets where you wish; then you will pay me, if you please to do so; and you will

send me away, if it appears right to you. You see I am very easily managed, my Lord."

"Come, come, you are a very good sort of a fellow," said Monk, whose scrutinizing glance had not been able to find a single shade in the limpid eye of the fisherman. "Holloa, Digby!" An aide-de-camp appeared. "You will conduct this good fellow and his companions to the little tents of the canteens, in front of the marshes, so that they will be near their bark, and yet not sleep on board to-night. What is the matter, Spithead?"

Spithead was the sergeant from whom Monk had borrowed a piece of tobacco for his supper. Spithead having entered the general's tent without being sent for, had drawn this question from Monk.

"My Lord," said he, "a French gentleman has just presented himself at the outposts, and asks to speak to your Honor."

All this was said, be it understood, in English; but, notwithstanding, it produced a slight emotion on the fisherman, which Monk, occupied with his sergeant, did not remark.

"Who is the gentleman?" asked Monk.

"My Lord," replied Spithead, "he told it me; but those devils of French names are so difficult to be pronounced by a Scotch throat, that I could not retain it. I believe, however, from what the guards say, that it is the same gentleman who presented himself yesterday at the halt, and whom your Honor would not receive."

"That is true; I was holding a council of officers."

"Will your Honor give any orders respecting this gentleman?"

"Yes, let him be brought here."

"Must we take any precautions?"

"Such as what?"

"Binding his eyes, for instance."

"To what purpose? He can only see what I desire should be seen; that is to say, that I have around me eleven thousand brave men, who ask no better than to have their throats cut in honor of the Parliament of Scotland and England."

"And this man, my Lord?" said Spithead, pointing to the fisherman, who during this conversation had remained standing and motionless, like a man who sees but does not understand.

"Ah! that is true," said Monk. Then turning towards the fisherman, "I shall see you again, my brave fellow," said he; "I have chosen you a lodging. Digby, take him to it. Fear nothing; your money shall be sent to you presently."

"Thank you, my Lord," said the fisherman; and after having bowed, he left the tent, accompanied by Digby. Before he had gone a hundred paces he found his companions, who were chattering with a volubility which did not seem exempt from inquietude; but he made them a sign which seemed to reassure them. "Holloa, you fellows!" said the master, "come this way. His Lordship, General Monk, has the generosity to pay us for our fish, and the goodness to give us hospitality for to-night."

The fishermen gathered round their leader; and, conducted by Digby, the little troop proceeded towards the canteens, — the post, as may be remembered, which had been assigned them. As they went along in the dark, the fishermen passed close to the guards who were conducting the French gentleman to General Monk. This gentleman was on horseback and enveloped in a large cloak, which prevented the master from seeing him, however great his curiosity might be. As to the gentleman,

ignorant that he was elbowing compatriots, he did not pay any attention to the little troop.

The aide-de-camp installed his guests in a tolerably comfortable tent, from which was dislodged an Irish canteen-woman, who went, with her six children, to sleep where she could. A large fire was burning in front of this tent, and threw its purple light over the grassy pools of the marsh, rippled by a fresh breeze. The installation made, the aide-de-camp wished the fishermen good-night, calling to their notice that they might see from the door of the tent the masts of their boat, which was tossing gently on the Tweed, — a proof that it had not yet sunk. The sight of this appeared to delight the leader of the fishermen infinitely.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TREASURE.

The French gentleman whom Spithead had announced to Monk, and who had passed, so closely wrapped in his cloak, by the fisherman who left the general's tent five minutes before he entered it, — the French gentleman passed through the various posts without even casting his eyes around him, for fear of appearing indiscreet. As the order had been given, he was conducted to the tent of the general. The gentleman was left alone in the sort of antechamber in front of the principal body of the tent, where he awaited Monk, who only delayed till he had heard the report of his people, and observed through the opening in the canvas the countenance of the person who solicited an audience. Without doubt the report of those who had accompanied the French gentleman emphasized the discretion with which he had conducted himself; for the first impression the stranger received of the welcome made him by the general was more favorable than he could have expected at such a moment, and on the part of so suspicious a man. Nevertheless, according to his custom when he found himself in the presence of a stranger, Monk fixed upon him his penetrating eyes, which scrutiny the stranger, on his part, sustained without embarrassment or notice. At the end of a few seconds the general made a gesture with his hand and head in sign of attention.

"My Lord," said the gentleman, in excellent English, "I have requested an interview with your Honor, for an affair of importance."

"Monsieur," replied Monk, in French, "you speak our language well for a son of the Continent. I ask your pardon, — for doubtless the question is indiscreet, — do you speak French with the same purity?"

"There is nothing surprising, my Lord, in my speaking English tolerably; I resided for some time in England in my youth, and since then I have made two voyages to this country." These words were spoken in French, and with a purity of accent that bespoke not only a Frenchman, but a Frenchman from the environs of Tours.

"And what part of England have you resided in, Monsieur?"

"In my youth, London, my Lord; then, about 1635, I made a pleasure trip to Scotland; and lastly, in 1648, I lived for some time at Newcastle, particularly in the convent, the gardens of which are now occupied by your army."

"Excuse me, Monsieur; but you must comprehend that these questions are necessary on my part, do you not?"

"It would astonish me, my Lord, if they were not made."

"Now, then, Monsieur, what can I do to serve you? What do you desire of me?"

"This, my Lord, — but in the first place, are we alone?"

"Perfectly so, Monsieur, except, of course, the post which guards us." So saying, Monk pulled open the canvas with his hand, and pointed to the soldier who was placed at ten paces from the tent, and who at the first call could have rendered assistance in a second.

"In that case, my Lord," said the gentleman, in as calm a tone as if he had been for a length of time in habits of intimacy with his interlocutor, "I have made up my mind to address myself to you, because I believe you to be an honest man. Indeed, the communication I am about to make to you will prove to you the esteem in which I hold you."

Monk, astonished at this language, which established between him and the French gentleman equality at least, raised his piercing eye to the stranger's face, and with a sensible irony conveyed by the inflection of his voice alone, — for not a muscle of his face moved, — "I thank you, Monsieur," said he; "but, in the first place, to whom have I the honor of speaking?"

"I sent you my name by your sergeant, my Lord."

"Excuse him, Monsieur, he is a Scotchman, — he could not retain it."

"I am called the Comte de la Fère, Monsieur," said Athos, bowing.

"The Comte de la Fère?" said Monk, endeavoring to recollect the name. "Pardon me, Monsieur, but this appears to be the first time I have ever heard that name. Do you fill any post at the court of France?"

"None; I am a simple gentleman."

"What dignity?"

"King Charles I. made me a knight of the Garter, and Queen Anne of Austria has given me the cordon of the Holy Ghost. These are my only dignities."

"The Garter! the Holy Ghost! Are you a knight of those two orders, Monsieur?"

"Yes."

"And on what occasions have such favors been bestowed upon you?"

"For services rendered to their Majesties."

Monk looked with astonishment at this man, who appeared to him so simple and at the same time so grand. Then, as if he had renounced endeavoring to penetrate this mystery of a simplicity and grandeur upon which the stranger did not seem disposed to give him any other information than that which he had already received, — "It was you," he said, "who presented yourself yesterday at our advanced posts?"

"And was sent back, — yes, my Lord."

"Many officers, Monsieur, would not permit anybody to enter their camp, particularly on the eve of a probable battle. But I differ from my colleagues, and like to leave nothing behind me. Every piece of intelligence is good to me: all danger is sent to me by God, and I weigh it in my hand with the energy he has given me. So, yesterday, you were sent back because I was holding a council. To-day I am at liberty, — speak."

"My Lord, you have done the better in receiving me, since what I have to say has nothing to do with the battle you are about to fight with General Lambert, or with your camp; and the proof is, that I turned away my head that I might not see your men, and closed my eyes that I might not count your tents. No, I come to speak to you, my Lord, on my own account."

"Speak, then, Monsieur," said Monk.

"Just now," continued Athos, "I had the honor of telling your Lordship that I for a long time lived in Newcastle; it was in the time of Charles I., and when the late king was given up to Cromwell by the Scots."

"I know," said Monk, coldly.

"I had at that time a large sum in gold, and on the eve of the battle, from a presentiment, perhaps, of the turn which things would take on the morrow, I concealed it in the principal vault of the convent of Newcastle, in

the tower the summit of which you may see from here silvered by the moon. My treasure has, then, remained interred there, and I have come to entreat your Honor to permit me to withdraw it before, perhaps, the battle turning that way, a mine or some other enterprise of war may destroy the building and scatter my gold, or render it so exposed to view that the soldiers will take possession of it."

Monk was well acquainted with mankind; he saw in the physiognomy of this gentleman all the energy, all the reason, all the circumspection possible; he could therefore only attribute to a magnanimous confidence the revelation the Frenchman had made him, and he showed himself profoundly touched by it.

"Monsieur," said he, "you have augured justly by me. But is the sum worth the trouble to which you expose yourself? Do you even believe that it can be in the place where you left it?"

"It is there, Monsieur, I do not doubt."

"That is a reply to one question; but to the other. I asked you if the sum were so large as to lead you to expose yourself thus."

"It is really large; yes, my Lord, for it is a million I enclosed in two casks."

"A million!" cried Monk, whom this time, in his turn, Athos looked at earnestly and long. Monk perceived this, and his mistrust returned.

"Here is a man," thought he, "who is laying a snare for me. — So you wish to withdraw this money, Monsieur," replied he, "as I understand?"

"If you please, my Lord."

"To-day?"

"This very evening, and that on account of the circumstances I have named."

"But, Monsieur," objected Monk, "General Lambert is as near the abbey where you have to act as I am. Why, then, have you not addressed yourself to him?"

"Because, my Lord, when one acts in important matters, it is best to consult one's instinct before everything. Well, General Lambert does not inspire me with so much confidence as you do."

"Be it so, Monsieur. I will assist you in recovering your money, if indeed it can still be there; for that is far from likely. Since 1648 twelve years have rolled away, and many events have taken place." Monk dwelt upon this point, to see if the French gentleman would seize the evasions that were open to him; but Athos was inflexible.

"I assure you, my Lord," he said firmly, "that my conviction is that the two casks have changed neither place nor master."

This reply removed one suspicion from the mind of Monk, but it suggested another. Without doubt this Frenchman was some emissary sent to entice into error the protector of the Parliament; the gold was nothing but a lure, and by the help of this they thought to excite the cupidity of the general. This gold might not exist. It was Monk's business, then, to seize in the fact of falsehood and trick the French gentleman, and to draw from the false step itself in which his enemies wished to entrap him, a triumph for his renown. When Monk was determined how to act, —

"Monsieur," said he to Athos, "will you do me the honor to share my supper this evening?"

"Yes, my Lord," replied Athos, bowing; "for you do me an honor of which I feel myself worthy, by the inclination which drew me towards you."

"It is the more gracious on your part to accept my

invitation with such frankness, because my cooks are but few and inexpert, and my providers have returned this evening empty-handed; so that if it had not been for a fisherman of your nation who strayed into our camp, General Monk would have gone to bed without his supper to-day. I have then some fresh fish to offer you, as the vender assures me."

"My Lord, it is principally for the sake of having the honor to pass an hour more with you."

After this exchange of civilities, during which Monk had lost nothing of his circumspection, the supper, or that which was to serve for one, had been laid upon a pine table. Monk made a sign to the Comte de la Fère to be seated at this table, and took his place opposite to him. A single dish filled with boiled fish, set before the two illustrious guests, promised more to hungry stomachs than to delicate palates. While supping, — that is, while eating the fish, washed down with bad ale, — Monk got Athos to recount to him the last events of the Fronde, the reconciliation of M. de Condé with the king, and the probable marriage of the king with the Infanta of Spain; but he avoided, as Athos himself avoided, all allusion to the political interests which united, or rather which disunited at this time, England, France, and Holland. Monk in this conversation convinced himself of one thing, which he must have remarked at the first words exchanged, — that was, that he had to do with a man of high distinction. Such a man could not be an assassin, and it was repugnant to Monk to believe him to be a spy; but there was sufficient subtlety as well as firmness in Athos to lead Monk to fancy that he was a conspirator. When they had quitted table, —

"You still believe in your treasure, then, Monsieur?" asked Monk.

"Yes, my Lord."

"Seriously."

"Quite seriously."

"And you think you can find again the place where it was buried?"

"At the first inspection."

"Well, Monsieur, from curiosity I will accompany you. And it is the more necessary that I should do so, since you would find great difficulty in passing through the camp without me or one of my lieutenants."

"General, I would not suffer you to inconvenience yourself if I did not, in fact, stand in need of your company; but as I recognize that this company is not only honorable, but necessary, I accept it."

"Do you desire that we should take any people with us?" asked Monk.

"General, I believe that would be useless, if you yourself do not see the necessity for it. Two men and a horse will suffice to transport two casks on board the felucca which brought me hither."

"But it will be necessary to pick, dig, and remove the earth, and split stones; you don't reckon upon doing this work yourself, Monsieur, do you?"

"General, there is no picking or digging required. The treasure is buried in the sepulchral vault of the convent, under a stone in which is fixed a large iron ring, and under that a little stair of four steps opens. The two casks are there, placed end to end, covered with a coat of plaster in the form of a bier. There is, besides, an inscription, which will enable me to recognize the stone; and as I am not willing, in an affair of delicacy and confidence, to keep the secret from your Honor, here is the inscription: 'Hic jacet venerabilis, Petrus Guilielmus Scott, Canon Honorab. Conventûs Novi Castelli. Obiit

quartâ et decimâ die Feb. ann. Dom. MCCVIII. Requiescat in pace.'"

Monk did not lose a single word. He was astonished either at the marvellous duplicity of this man and the superior style in which he played his part, or at the good loyal faith with which he presented his request, in a situation in which was concerned a million of money, risked against the stab of a poniard, amid an army that would have considered the theft as a restitution. "That is well," said he; "I will accompany you; and the adventure appears to me so wonderful that I will carry the flambeau myself." And saying these words, he girded on a short sword, placed a pistol in his belt, disclosing in this movement, which opened his doublet a little, the fine rings of a coat of mail, designed to protect him against the first poniard stroke of an assassin. After which he took a Scotch dirk in his left hand, and then turning to Athos, "Are you ready, Monsieur?" said he.

"I am."

Athos, in contrast to what Monk had done, unfastened his poniard, which he placed upon the table; unhooked his sword-belt, which he laid close to his poniard; and without affectation, opening his doublet as if to seek his handkerchief, showed beneath his fine cambric shirt his naked breast, without arms, either offensive or defensive.

"This is truly a singular man," said Monk; "he is without any arms; he has an ambuscade placed somewhere yonder."

"General," said he, as if he had divined Monk's thought, "you wish we should be alone. That is right, but a great captain ought never to expose himself with temerity. It is night, the passage of the marsh may present dangers; take others with you."

"You are right," replied he, calling Digby. The aide-de-camp appeared. "Fifty men with swords and muskets," said he, looking at Athos.

"That is too few if there is danger, too many if there is not."

"I will go alone," said Monk. "Digby, I want nobody. Come, Monsieur."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MARCH.

Athos and Monk traversed, in going from the camp towards the Tweed, that part of the ground which Digby had traversed with the fisherman coming from the Tweed to the camp. The aspect of this place, and the changes man had wrought in it, were of a nature to produce a great effect upon a lively and delicate imagination like that of Athos. Athos looked at nothing but these desolate spots; Monk looked at nothing but Athos, — at Athos, who, with his eyes sometimes directed towards heaven and sometimes towards the earth, sought, thought, and sighed. Digby, whom the last orders of the general, and particularly the accent with which he had given them, had at first a little excited, — Digby followed the night-walkers about twenty paces; but the general having turned round as if astonished to find that his orders had not been obeyed, the aide-de-camp perceived his indiscretion, and returned to his tent. He supposed that the general wished to make, incognito, one of those vigilant inspections which every experienced captain invariably makes on the eve of a decisive engagement; he explained to himself the presence of Athos in this case as an inferior explains all that is mysterious on the part of his leader. Athos might be, and indeed in the eyes of Digby must be, a spy, whose information was to enlighten the general.

At the end of a walk of about ten minutes among the tents and the posts, which were closer together near the headquarters, Monk entered upon a little causeway which diverged into three branches. That on the left led to the river; that in the middle to Newcastle Abbey on the marsh; that on the right crossed the first lines of Monk's camp, — that is to say, the lines nearest to Lambert's army. Beyond the river was an advanced post, belonging to Monk's army, which watched the enemy; it was composed of one hundred and fifty Scots. They had swam across the Tweed, giving the alarm; but as there was no bridge at that spot, and as Lambert's soldiers were not so prompt at taking to the water as Monk's were, the latter appeared not to have much uneasiness on that side. On this side of the river, at about five hundred paces from the old abbey, the fishermen had taken up their abode amid a crowd of small tents raised by the soldiers of the neighboring clans, who had with them their wives and children. All this confusion, seen by the moon's light, presented a striking appearance; the half-shade enlarged every detail; and the light — that flatterer which only attaches itself to the polished side of things — courted upon each rusty musket the point still left unspotted, and upon every rag of canvas the whitest and least sullied part. Monk arrived, then, with Athos, crossing this spot illumined by a double light, the silver splendor of the moon and the red blaze of the fires, at the meeting of the three causeways; there he stopped, and addressing his companion, "Monsieur," said he, "do you know your road?"

"General, if I am not mistaken, the middle causeway leads straight to the abbey."

"That is right; but we shall want lights to guide us in the vaults." Monk turned round.

"Ah! Digby has followed us, it appears," said he. "So much the better; he will procure us what we want."

"Yes, General, there is a man yonder who for some time has been walking behind us."

"Digby!" cried Monk, "Digby! come here, if you please."

But instead of obeying, the shadow made a motion of surprise, and retreating instead of advancing, bent down and disappeared along the jetty on the left, directing its course towards the lodging of the fishermen.

"It appears that it was not Digby," said Monk.

Both had followed the shadow which had vanished. But it was not so rare a thing for a man to be wandering about at eleven o'clock at night, in a camp in which are reposing ten or eleven thousand men, as to give Monk and Athos any alarm at that sudden disappearance.

"And now," said Monk, "since we must have a light, a lantern, a torch, something by which we may see where to set our feet, let us seek this light."

"General, the first soldier we meet will light us."

"No," said Monk, in order to discover if there were not any connivance between the Comte de la Fère and the fishermen, — "no, I should prefer one of these French sailors who came this evening to sell me their fish. They will leave to-morrow, and the secret will be better kept by them; whereas, if a report should be spread in the Scotch army that treasures are to be found in the Abbey of Newcastle, my Highlanders will believe there is a million concealed beneath every slab; and they will not leave one stone upon another in the building."

"Do as you think best, General," replied Athos, in so natural a tone of voice as made it evident that soldier or fisherman was the same to him, and that he had no preference.

Monk approached the causeway behind which had disappeared the person he had taken for Digby, and met a patrol who, making the tour of the tents, was going towards headquarters; he was stopped with his companion, gave the password, and went on. A soldier, roused by the noise, unrolled his plaid, and looked up to see what was going forward. "Ask him," said Monk to Athos, "where the fishermen are; if I were to speak to him, he would know me."

Athos went up to the soldier, who pointed out the tent to him; immediately Monk and Athos turned towards it. It appeared to the general that at the moment they came up, a shadow, like that they had already seen, glided into this tent; but on drawing nearer, he perceived that he must have been mistaken, for all of them were asleep, lying confusedly, and nothing was seen but arms and legs interlaced. Athos, fearing he should be suspected of connivance with some one of his compatriots, remained outside the tent.

"Holloa!" said Monk, in French, "wake up here!" Two or three of the sleepers got up. "I want a man to light me," continued Monk.

All made a movement, — some half-rising, the rest standing up. The leader was the first to rise.

"Your Honor may depend upon us," said a voice which made Athos start. "Where do you wish us to go?"

"You shall see. A light! Come quickly!"

"Yes, your Honor. Does it please your Honor that I should accompany you?"

"You or another, — it is of very little consequence, provided I have a light."

"It is strange!" thought Athos; "what a singular voice that fisherman has!"

"Some fire, you sirs!" cried the fisherman; "come,

make haste!" Then addressing in a low voice his companion nearest to him, "Get a light, Menneville," said he, "and hold yourself ready for anything."

One of the fishermen struck light from a stone, set fire to some tinder, and by the aid of a match lighted a lantern. The light immediately spread all over the tent.

"Are you ready, Monsieur?" said Monk to Athos, who had turned away, not to expose his face to the light

"Yes, General," replied he.

"Ah! the French gentleman!" said the leader of the fishermen to himself. "*Peste!* I have a great mind to charge you with the commission, Menneville; he may know me. Light! light!" This dialogue was pronounced at the back of the tent, and in so low a voice that Monk could not hear a syllable of it; he was, besides, talking with Athos. Menneville got himself ready in the mean time, or rather received the orders of his leader.

"Well?" said Monk.

"I am ready, General," said the fisherman.

Monk, Athos, and the fisherman left the tent.

"It is impossible!" thought Athos. "What dream could put that into my head?"

"Go forward; follow the middle causeway, and stretch out your legs," said Monk to the fisherman.

They were not twenty paces on their way, when the same shadow that had appeared to enter the tent came out of it again, crawled along as far as the piles, and, protected by that sort of parapet placed along the causeway, carefully observed the march of the general. All three disappeared in the night haze. They were walking towards Newcastle, the white stones of which they could already see, appearing like tombstones. After standing for a few seconds under the porch, they penetrated into the interior. The door had been broken open by hatchets.

A post of four men slept in safety in a corner; so certain were they that the attack would not take place on that side.

"Will not these men be in your way?" said Monk to Athos.

"On the contrary, Monsieur, they will assist in rolling out the casks, if your Honor will permit them."

"You are right."

The post, although fast asleep, roused up at the first steps of the three visitors among the briers and grass that had invaded the porch. Monk gave the password, and penetrated into the interior of the convent, preceded by the light. He walked last, watching even the least movement of Athos, his naked dirk in his sleeve, and ready to plunge it into the back of the gentleman at the first suspicious gesture he should see him make. But Athos, with a firm and sure step, traversed the chambers and courts. Not a door, not a window, was left in this building. The doors had been burnt, some upon the spot, and the charcoal of them was still jagged with the action of the fire, which had gone out of itself, powerless, no doubt, to get to the heart of those massive joints of oak fastened together by iron nails. As to the windows, all the panes having been broken, birds of darkness, alarmed by the torch, flew away through the holes of them. At the same time gigantic bats began to trace their vast, silent circles around the intruders, while their shadows appeared trembling upon the lofty stone-walls in the light projected by the torch. That spectacle was reassuring to men of reasoning minds. Monk concluded there could be no man in the convent, since wild creatures were there, who flew away at his approach. After having passed the rubbish, and torn away more than one branch of ivy that had made itself a guardian for the solitude, Athos arrived

at the vaults situated beneath the great hall, but entered from the chapel. There he stopped.

"Here we are, General," said he.

"This, then, is the slab?"

"Yes."

"Ay, and here is the ring; but the ring is sealed flatwise on the stone."

"We must have a lever."

"That 's a thing very easy to find."

While looking round them, Athos and Monk perceived a little ash of about three inches in diameter, which had shot up in an angle of the wall, reaching to a window, which its branches darkened.

"Have you a cutlass?" said Monk to the fisherman.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Cut down this tree, then."

The fisherman obeyed, but not without notching his cutlass. When the ash was cut and fashioned into the shape of a lever, the three men penetrated into the vault.

"Stop there!" said Monk to the fisherman, pointing to a corner of the cavern. "We are going to dig up some powder; your light may be dangerous."

The man drew back in a sort of terror, and faithfully kept to the post assigned him, while Monk and Athos turned behind a column at the foot of which, through a small opening, penetrated a moonbeam, reflected exactly by the stone of which the Comte de la Fère had come so far in search.

"This is it," said Athos, pointing out to the general the Latin inscription.

"Yes," said Monk.

Then, as if still willing to leave the Frenchman a means of evasion, "Do you not observe that this vault

has already been broken into," continued he, "and that several statues have been knocked down?"

"My Lord, you have, without doubt, heard it said that the religious devotion of your Scots loves to confide to the statues of the dead the valuable objects they have possessed during their lives. Therefore the soldiers had reason to think that under the pedestals of the statues which ornament most of these tombs, a treasure was hidden. They have consequently broken down pedestal and statue; but the tomb of the venerable canon, with which we have to do, is not distinguished by any monument. It is simple; therefore it has been protected by the superstitious fear which your Puritans have always had of sacrilege. Not a morsel of the masonry of this tomb has been chipped off."

"That is true," said Monk.

Athos seized the lever.

"Shall I help you?" said Monk.

"Thank you, my Lord; but I am not willing your Honor should put your hand to a work of which, perhaps, you would not take the responsibility if you knew the probable consequences of it."

Monk raised his head.

"What do you mean by that, Monsieur?"

"I mean — But that man —"

"Stop," said Monk; "I perceive what you are afraid of. I will test him." Monk turned towards the fisherman, whose profile, illuminated by the torch, he could clearly see.

"Come here, friend!" said he, in English, in a tone of command. The fisherman did not stir.

"That is well," continued he; "he does not know English. Speak to me, then, in English, if you please, Monsieur."

"My Lord," replied Athos, "I have frequently seen men in certain circumstances have such command over themselves as not to reply to a question put to them in a language they understood. The fisherman is perhaps more knowing than we believe him to be. Send him away, my Lord, I beg of you."

"Decidedly," thought Monk, "he wishes to have me alone in this vault. Never mind, we will go through with it; one man is as good as another man; and we are alone. — My friend," said Monk to the fisherman, "go back up the stairs we have just descended, and watch that nobody comes to disturb us." The fisherman made a sign of obedience. "Leave your torch," said Monk; "it would betray your presence, and might procure you a musket-ball."

The fisherman appeared to appreciate the counsel; he laid down the light, and disappeared under the vault of the stairs. Monk took up the torch and brought it to the foot of the column.

"Ah, ah!" said he; "money, then, is concealed under this tomb?"

"Yes, my Lord; and in five minutes you will no longer doubt it."

At the same time Athos struck a violent blow upon the plaster, which split, presenting a chink for the point of the lever. Athos introduced the bar into this crack; and soon large pieces of plaster yielded, rising up like rounded slabs. Then the Comte de la Fère seized the stones and threw them away with a force that hands so delicate as his might not have been supposed capable of.

"My Lord," said Athos, "this is plainly the masonry of which I told your Honor."

"Yes; but I do not yet see the casks," said Monk.

"If I had a poniard," said Athos, looking round him,

"you should soon see them, Monsieur. Unfortunately I left mine in your tent."

"I would willingly offer you mine," said Monk, "but the blade is too thin for such work."

Athos appeared to look around him for something that might serve as a substitute for the weapon he desired. Monk did not lose one of the movements of his hands, or one of the expressions of his eyes.

"Why do you not ask the fisherman for his cutlass?" said Monk; "he had a cutlass."

"Ah! that is true," said Athos, "for he cut the tree down with it;" and he advanced towards the stairs.

"Friend," said he to the fisherman, "throw me down your cutlass, if you please; I want it."

The noise of the falling weapon echoed over the stones of the vault.

"Take it," said Monk; "it is a solid instrument, as I have seen, and a strong hand might make good use of it."

Athos appeared to give the words of Monk only the natural and simple sense which most obviously belonged to them. Nor did he remark, or at least appear to remark, that when he returned with the weapon, Monk drew back, placing his left hand on the stock of his pistol; in the right he already held his dirk. Athos went to work then, turning his back to Monk, placing his life in his hands without possible defence. He then struck, for several seconds, so skilfully and sharply upon the intermediary plaster, that it separated in two parts, and Monk was able to discern two casks placed end to end, which their weight maintained motionless in their chalky envelope.

"My Lord," said Athos, "you see that my presentiments have not been disappointed."

"Yes, Monsieur," said Monk, "and I have good reason to believe you are satisfied; are you not?"

"Doubtless I am; the loss of this money would have been inexpressibly great to me; but I was certain that God, who protects the good cause, would not have permitted this gold, which should procure its triumph, to be diverted to baser purposes."

"You are, upon my honor, as mysterious in your words as in your actions, Monsieur," said Monk. "Just now I did not perfectly understand you when you said that you were not willing to throw upon me the responsibility of the work we were accomplishing."

"I had reason to say so, my Lord."

"And now you speak to me of the good cause. What do you mean by the words 'the good cause'? We are defending at this moment, in England, five or six causes; which does not prevent every one from considering his own, not only as the good cause, but as the best. What is yours, Monsieur? Speak boldly, that we may see if upon this point, to which you appear to attach great importance, we are of the same opinion."

Athos fixed upon Monk one of those penetrating looks which seem to convey to him on whom they rest a challenge to conceal a single one of his thoughts; then, taking off his hat, he began in a solemn voice, while his interlocutor, with one hand upon his face, allowed that long and nervous hand to compress his mustache and beard, at the same time that his vague and melancholy eye wandered about the recesses of the vaults.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HEART AND MIND.

"My Lord," said the Comte de la Fère, "you are a noble Englishman, you are a loyal man; you are speaking to a noble Frenchman, to a man of heart. This gold contained in these two casks before us, I have told you was mine. I was wrong; it is the first lie I have pronounced in my life, — a temporary lie, it is true. This gold is the property of King Charles II., exiled from his country, driven from his palaces, losing at once his father and his throne, and deprived of everything, even of the melancholy happiness of kissing on his knees the stone upon which the hands of his murderers have written that simple epitaph which will eternally cry out for vengeance upon them: 'HERE LIES CHARLES I.'"

Monk grew slightly pale, and an imperceptible shudder crept over his skin and raised his gray mustache.

"I," continued Athos, — "I, Comte de la Fère, the last, the only faithful friend the poor abandoned prince has left, — I have offered to come hither to find the man upon whom now depends the fate of royalty and of England; and I have come, and have placed myself under the eye of this man, naked and unarmed in his hands, saying: 'My Lord, here is the last resource of a prince whom God made your master, whom his birth made your king; upon you, and you alone, depend his life and his future. Will you employ this money in consoling England for the evils it must have suffered from

anarchy; that is to say, will you aid King Charles II.; or if not that, will you leave him free to act? You are master; you are king, — all-powerful master and king, for chance sometimes defeats the work of time and God.' I am here alone with you, my Lord. If the success being divided alarms you, if my complicity annoys you, you are armed, my Lord, and here is a grave ready-dug. If, on the contrary, the enthusiasm of your cause carries you away; if you are what you appear to be; if your hand in what it undertakes obeys your mind, and your mind your heart, — here are the means of ruining forever the cause of your enemy, Charles Stuart. Kill, then, the man you have before you, — for that man will never return to him who has sent him without bearing with him the deposit which Charles I., his father, confided to him, — and keep the gold which may assist in carrying on the civil war. Alas! my Lord, it is the fate of this unfortunate prince. He must either corrupt or kill, — for everything resists him, everything repulses him, everything is hostile to him; and yet he is marked with the divine seal, and he must, not to belie his blood, reascend the throne, or die upon the sacred soil of his country.

"My Lord, you have heard me. To any other but the illustrious man who listens to me, I would have said: 'My Lord, you are poor; my Lord, the king offers you this million as an earnest of an immense profit; take it, and serve Charles II. as I served Charles I., and I feel assured that God, who listens to us, who sees us, who alone reads your heart, shut up from all human eyes, — I am assured God will give you a happy eternal life after a happy death.' But to General Monk, to the illustrious man of whose height I believe I have taken measure, I say: 'My Lord, there is for you in the history of peoples and kings a brilliant place, an immortal,

imperishable glory, if alone, without any other interests but those of justice and the good of your country, you become the supporter of your king. Many others have been conquerors and glorious usurpers; you, my Lord, you will be content with being the most virtuous, the most honest, and the most incorruptible of men: you will have held a crown in your hand, and instead of placing it upon your own brow, you will have deposited it upon the head of him for whom it was made. Oh, my Lord, act thus, and you will leave to posterity the most enviable of names, in which no human creature can rival you!'"

Athos stopped. During the whole time that the noble gentleman was speaking, Monk had not given one sign of either approbation or disapprobation; scarcely even, during this vehement appeal, had his eyes been animated with that fire which bespeaks intelligence. The Comte de la Fère looked at him sorrowfully, and on seeing that melancholy countenance, felt discouragement penetrate to his very heart. At length Monk appeared to recover, and broke the silence.

"Monsieur," said he, in a mild, calm tone, "in reply to you, I will make use of your own words. To any other but yourself I would reply by expulsion, imprisonment, or still worse; for, in fact, you tempt me and you force me at the same time. But you are one of those men, Monsieur, to whom it is impossible to refuse the attention and respect they merit; you are a brave gentleman, Monsieur, — I say so, and I am a judge. You just now spoke of a deposit which the late king transmitted to his son; are you, then, one of those Frenchmen who, as I have heard, endeavored to carry off Charles I. from Whitehall?"

"Yes, my Lord; it was I who was beneath the scaffold

during the execution, — I who, having been unable to save him, received upon my brow the blood of the martyred king. I received, at the same time, the last word of Charles I.; it was to me he said, 'REMEMBER!' and in saying to me 'Remember!' he made allusion to the money at your feet, my Lord."

"I have heard much of you, Monsieur," said Monk, "but I am happy, in the first place, to have appreciated you by my own inspiration, and not by my remembrances. I will give you, then, explanations that I have given to no other, and you will appreciate what a distinction I make between you and the persons who have hitherto been sent to me."

Athos bowed, and prepared to absorb greedily the words which fell, one by one, from the mouth of Monk, — words rare and precious as the dew in the desert.

"You spoke to me," said Monk, "of Charles II.; but pray, Monsieur, of what consequence to me is that phantom of a king? I have grown old in war and in politics, which are nowadays so closely linked together that every man of the sword must fight, in virtue of his rights or his ambition, with a personal interest, and not blindly behind an officer, as in ordinary wars. For myself, I perhaps desire nothing, but I fear much. In the war of to-day resides the liberty of England, and perhaps that of every Englishman. How can you expect that I, free in the position I have made for myself, should go willingly and hold out my hands to the shackles of a stranger? That is all Charles is to me. He has fought battles here which he has lost; he is therefore a bad captain. He has succeeded in no negotiation; he is therefore a bad diplomatist. He has paraded his wants and his miseries in all the courts of Europe; he has therefore a weak and pusillanimous heart. Nothing noble, nothing great, nothing

strong, has hitherto emanated from that genius which aspires to govern one of the greatest kingdoms of the earth. I know this Charles, then, under none but bad aspects; and yet you would wish me, a man of good sense, to go and make myself gratuitously the slave of a creature who is inferior to me in military capacity, in politics, and in dignity! No, Monsieur. When some great and noble action shall have taught me to value Charles, I will perhaps recognize his rights to a throne from which we have cast the father because he lacked virtues which up to this time are wanting also in his son. But hitherto, in the matter of rights, I recognize only my own: the Revolution made me a general; my sword will make me protector, if I wish it. Let Charles show himself, let him present himself, let him submit to the competitions open to genius; and, above all, let him remember that he is of a race from whom more will be looked for than from any other. Therefore, Monsieur, say no more about him. I neither refuse nor accept: I reserve myself — I wait."

Athos knew Monk to be too well informed of all concerning Charles to venture to urge the discussion further; it was neither the time nor the place. "My Lord," then said he, "I have nothing to do but to thank you."

"And for what, Monsieur? For your having formed a correct opinion of me, and for my having acted according to your judgment? Is that, in truth, worthy of thanks? This gold which you are about to carry to Charles will serve me as a test for him; in seeing the use he will make of it I shall have an opinion, which now I have not."

"And yet does not your Honor fear to compromise yourself by allowing such a sum to be carried away for the service of your enemy?"

"My enemy, say you? Eh, Monsieur, I have no enemies. I am in the service of the Parliament, which orders me to combat General Lambert and King Charles, — its enemies, and not mine. I combat them. If the Parliament, on the contrary, ordered me to unfurl my standards at London, to assemble my soldiers on the banks of the Thames to receive Charles II. —"

"You would obey?" cried Athos, joyfully.

"Pardon me," said Monk, smiling, "I was going — I, a gray-headed man — in truth, how did I forget myself? — I was going to speak like a foolish young man."

"Then you would not obey?" said Athos.

"I do not say that either, Monsieur. The welfare of my country before everything. God, who has given me the power, has, no doubt, willed that I should use that power for the good of all; and he has given me, at the same time, discernment. If the Parliament were to order such a thing, I should — reflect."

The brow of Athos became clouded. "Then I may decidedly say that your Honor is not inclined to favor King Charles II.?"

"You continue to question me, Monsieur the Count; allow me, in my turn, if you please."

"Do, Monsieur; and may God inspire you with the idea of replying to me as frankly as I will reply to you."

"When you shall have taken this money back to your prince, what advice will you give him?"

Athos fixed upon Monk a proud and resolute look. "My Lord," said he, "with this million, which others would perhaps employ in negotiating, I would advise the king to raise two regiments; to enter by Scotland, which you have just pacified; to give to the people the franchises which the revolution promised them, and in which it has not in all cases kept its word. I should advise

him to command in person this little army, — which would, believe me, increase, — and to die, standard in hand, and sword in its sheath, saying, 'Englishmen! I am the third king of my race you have killed; beware of the justice of God!'"

Monk hung down his head, and mused for an instant. "If he succeeded," said he, — "which is very improbable, but not impossible, for everything is possible in this world, — what would you advise him to do?"

"To think that by the will of God he lost his crown, but by the good will of men he has recovered it."

An ironical smile passed over the lips of Monk. "Unfortunately, Monsieur," said he, "kings do not know how to follow good advice."

"Ah, my Lord, Charles II. is not a king," replied Athos, smiling in his turn, but with a very different expression from that of Monk.

"Let us terminate this conversation, Monsieur the Count, — that is your desire, is it not?"

Athos bowed.

"I will give orders that these two casks shall be transported whither you please. Where are you lodging, Monsieur?"

"In a little bourg at the mouth of the river, your Honor."

"Oh, I know the bourg; it consists of five or six houses, does it not?"

"Exactly. Well, I inhabit the first. Two net-makers occupy it with me; it is their boat which placed me on shore."

"But your own vessel, Monsieur?"

"My vessel is at anchor, a quarter of a mile at sea, and waits for me."

"You do not think, however, of setting out immediately?"

"My Lord, I shall try once more to convince your Honor."

"You will not succeed," replied Monk; "but it is of consequence that you should quit Newcastle without leaving on your passage the least suspicion that might prove injurious to you or to me. To-morrow my officers think Lambert will attack me. I, on the contrary, will guarantee that he will not stir; it is, in my opinion, impossible. Lambert leads an army devoid of homogeneous principles, and there is no possible army with such elements. I have taught my soldiers to consider my authority subordinate to another, the result being that after me, around me, and beneath me they still look for something. And the consequence is, that if I were dead, which might happen, my army would not be demoralized all at once; that if I chose to absent myself, for instance, as it does please me to do sometimes, there would not be in my camp the shadow of uneasiness or disorder. I am the magnet, — the sympathetic and natural strength of the English. All those scattered arms that will be sent against me I shall attract to myself. Lambert, at this moment, commands eighteen thousand deserters; but I have never mentioned that to my officers, you may easily suppose. Nothing is more useful to an army than the expectation of a coming battle; everybody is awake, everybody is on his guard. I tell you this that you may live in perfect security. Do not be in a hurry, then, to cross the seas; within a week there will be something new, either a battle or an accommodation. Then, as you have judged me to be an honorable man, and confided your secret to me, and I have to thank you for this confidence, I will come and pay you a visit or send for you. Do not go before I send you word. I repeat the request."

"I promise you, General," cried Athos, with a joy so great, that, in spite of all his circumspection, he could not prevent its sparkling in his eyes.

Monk surprised this flash, and immediately extinguished it by one of those mute smiles which always, with his interlocutors, closed the entrance they believed they had made into his mind.

"Then, my Lord, you desire me to wait a week?"

"A week, — yes, Monsieur."

"And during this week what shall I do?"

"If there should be a battle, keep at a distance from it, I conjure you. I know the French delight in such amusements; you might take a fancy to see how we fight, and you might receive a wandering bullet. Our Scots are very bad marksmen, and I do not wish that a worthy gentleman like you should return to France wounded. I should not like, either, to be obliged myself to send to your prince his million left here by you; for then it would be said, and with reason, that I paid the pretender to enable him to make war against the Parliament. Go, then, Monsieur, and let it be done as has been agreed upon."

"Ah, my Lord," said Athos, "what joy it would give me to be the first to penetrate the noble heart which beats beneath that cloak!"

"You decidedly think, then, that I have secrets," said Monk, without changing the half-cheerful expression of his countenance. "Why, Monsieur, what secret can you expect to find in the hollow head of a soldier? But it is getting late, and our torch is almost out; let us call our man. — Holloa!" he cried, in French, approaching the stairs; "holloa! fisherman!"

The fisherman, benumbed by the cold night-air, replied in a hoarse voice, asking what they wanted of him.

"Go to the post," said Monk, "and order a sergeant, in the name of General Monk, to come here immediately."

This was a commission easily performed; for the sergeant, uneasy at the general's being in that desolate abbey, had drawn nearer by degrees, and was not much farther off than the fisherman. The general's order was therefore heard by him, and he hastened to obey it.

"Get a horse and two men," said Monk.

"A horse and two men?" repeated the sergeant.

"Yes," replied Monk. "Have you any means of getting a horse with a pack-saddle or two panniers?"

"No doubt, at a hundred paces off, in the Scotch camp."

"Very well."

"What shall I do with the horse, General?"

"Look here."

The sergeant descended the three steps which separated him from Monk, and came into the vault.

"You see," said Monk, "that gentleman yonder?"

"Yes, General."

"And you see these two casks?"

"Perfectly."

"One of these two casks contains powder, and the other balls; I wish these casks to be transported to the little bourg at the mouth of the river, which I reckon upon occupying to-morrow with two hundred muskets. You understand that the commission is a secret one, for it is a movement that may decide the fate of the battle."

"Oh, my general!" murmured the sergeant.

"Mind, then! Let these casks be fastened on the horse, and let them be escorted by two men and you to the residence of this gentleman, who is my friend. But take care that nobody knows it."

"I would go by the marsh if I knew the road," said the sergeant.

"I know one myself," said Athos; "it is not wide, but it is solid, having been made upon piles; and with precaution we shall get there safely enough."

"Do everything this gentleman shall order you to do."

"Oh! oh! the casks are heavy," said the sergeant, trying to lift one.

"They weigh four hundred pounds each, if they contain what they ought to contain, do they not, Monsieur?"

"Thereabouts," said Athos.

The sergeant went in search of the two men and the horse. Monk, left alone with Athos, affected to speak to him of nothing but indifferent things, while examining the vault in a cursory manner. Then, hearing the horse's steps, "I leave you with your men, Monsieur," said he, "and return to the camp. You are perfectly safe."

"I shall see you again, then, my Lord?" asked Athos.

"That is agreed upon, Monsieur, and with much pleasure."

Monk held out his hand to Athos.

"Ah! my Lord, if you would —" murmured Athos.

"Hush! Monsieur, it is agreed that we shall speak no more of that." And bowing to Athos, he went up the stairs, passing, about the middle of them, his men who were coming down.

Monk had not gone twenty paces from the abbey when a faint but prolonged whistle was heard at a distance. He listened, but, seeing nothing and hearing nothing, continued on his way. Then he remembered the fisherman, and looked about for him; but the fisherman had disappeared. If he had, however, looked with more attention, he might have seen that man, bent double, gliding like a serpent along the stones and losing himself

in the mist floating over the surface of the marsh. He might have equally seen, seeking to pierce that mist, a spectacle that would have interested him, — the masts of the fishing-boat, which had changed place, and was now nearer the shore. But Monk saw nothing; and thinking he had nothing to fear, he entered the desert causeway which led to his camp. It was then that the disappearance of the fisherman appeared strange, and that a real suspicion began to take possession of his mind. He had just placed at the orders of Athos the only post that could protect him. He had a mile of causeway to traverse before he could regain his camp. The fog increased to such density that he could scarcely distinguish objects at ten paces' distance. Monk then thought he heard the sound of an oar over the marsh on the right. "Who goes there?" said he.

But nobody answered; then he cocked his pistol, took his sword in his hand, and quickened his pace, without, however, being willing to call anybody. Such a summons, for which there was no absolute necessity, appeared unworthy of him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE NEXT DAY.

It was seven o'clock in the morning; the first rays of the sun lighted the pools of the marsh, in which it was reflected like a red ball, when Athos, awaking and opening the window of his bed-chamber, which looked out upon the banks of the river, perceived, at fifteen paces' distance from him, the sergeant and the men who had accompanied him the evening before, and who, after having deposited the casks at his house, had returned to the camp by the causeway on the right.

For what could these men, after having returned to the camp, have come back? That was the first question which presented itself to Athos. The sergeant, with his head raised, appeared to be watching the moment when the gentleman should appear, to address him. Athos, surprised to see these men there, whom he had seen depart the night before, could not forbear expressing his astonishment to them.

"There is nothing surprising in that, Monsieur," said the sergeant; "for yesterday the general commanded me to watch over your safety, and I thought it right to obey that order."

"Is the general at the camp?" asked Athos.

"No doubt he is, Monsieur; as when he left you he was going back."

"Well, wait for me a moment; I am going thither to render an account of the fidelity with which you fulfilled

your duty, and to get my sword, which I left yesterday upon the table."

"That falls out very well," said the sergeant, "for we were about to beg you to do so."

Athos fancied he could detect an air of equivocal *bonhomie* upon the countenance of the sergeant; but the adventure of the vault might have excited the curiosity of the man, and he was not surprised that he allowed some of the feelings which agitated his mind to appear in his face. Athos closed the doors carefully, confiding the keys to Grimaud, who had chosen his domicile beneath the shed itself, which led to the cellar where the casks had been deposited. The sergeant escorted the Comte de la Fère to the camp. There a fresh guard awaited him, and relieved the four men who had conducted Athos. This fresh guard was commanded by the aide-de-camp Digby, who, on their way, fixed upon Athos looks so little encouraging that the Frenchman asked himself whence arose, with regard to him, this vigilance and this severity, when the evening before he had been left perfectly free. He continued his way not the less to the headquarters, keeping to himself the observations which men and things forced him to make. He found under the general's tent, to which he had been introduced the evening before, three superior officers; these were Monk's lieutenant and two colonels. Athos perceived his sword; it was still on the table where he had left it. Neither of the officers had seen Athos, consequently neither of them knew him. Monk's lieutenant asked, on the appearance of Athos, if that were the same gentleman with whom the general had left the tent.

"Yes, your Honor," said the sergeant; "it is the same."

"But," said Athos, haughtily, "I do not deny it, I think; and now, gentlemen, in my turn, permit me to

ask you for what purpose this question is asked, and particularly for some explanation of the tone in which you ask it?"

"Monsieur," said the lieutenant, "if we address this question to you, it is because we have a right to do so; and if we ask it in a particular tone, it is because that tone, believe me, agrees with the circumstances."

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "you do not know who I am; but I must tell you I acknowledge no one as my equal here but General Monk. Where is he? Let me be conducted to him, and if he has any questions to put to me, I will answer him, and to his satisfaction, I hope. I repeat, gentlemen, where is the general?"

"Eh! good God! you know better than we do where he is," said the lieutenant.

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"Monsieur," said Athos, "I do not understand you."

"You will understand me — and, on your part, in the first place, do not speak so loud."

Athos smiled disdainfully.

"We don't ask you to smile," said one of the colonels, warmly; "we require you to answer."

"And I, gentlemen, declare to you that I will not reply until I am in the presence of the general."

"But," replied the same colonel who had already spoken, "you know very well that you demand what is impossible."

"This is the second time I have received this strange reply to the wish I express," said Athos. "Is the general absent?"

This question was made with such apparent good faith, and the gentleman wore an air of such natural surprise, that the three officers exchanged a meaning look. The

lieutenant, by a sort of tacit understanding with the other two, was spokesman.

"Monsieur, the general left you last night in the boundaries of the monastery?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"And you went —"

"It is not for me to answer you, but for those who have accompanied me. They were your soldiers; ask them."

"But if we please to interrogate you?"

"Then it will please me to reply, Monsieur, that I am not answerable to any one here, that I know no one here but the general, and that it is to him alone I will reply."

"So be it, Monsieur; but as we are the masters, we constitute ourselves a council of war, and when you are before judges you must reply."

The countenance of Athos expressed nothing but astonishment and disdain, instead of the terror the officers expected to read in it at this threat.

"Scotch or English judges upon me, a subject of the King of France; upon me, placed under the safeguard of British honor! You are mad, gentlemen!" said Athos, shrugging his shoulders.

The officers looked at each other. "Then, Monsieur," said one of them, "do you pretend not to know where the general is?"

"To that, Monsieur, I have already replied."

"Yes, but your reply is incredible to us."

"It is true, nevertheless, gentlemen. Men of my rank are not generally liars. I am a gentleman, I have told you; and when I have at my side the sword which, by an excess of delicacy, I last night left upon the table whereon it still lies, believe me, no man says that to me which I am unwilling to hear. To-day, I am disarmed: if you

pretend to be my judges, try me; if you are but my executioners, kill me."

"But, Monsieur —" asked the lieutenant, in a more courteous voice, struck with the lofty coolness of Athos.

"Monsieur, I came to speak confidentially with your general about affairs of importance. It was not an ordinary welcome that he gave me. The accounts your soldiers can give you may convince you of that. If, then, the general received me in that manner, he knew what were my titles to his esteem. Now, you do not expect, I presume, that I shall reveal my secrets to you, and still less his."

"But these casks, — what do they contain?"

"Have you not put that question to your soldiers? What was their reply?"

"That they contained powder and ball."

"From whom had they that information? They must have told you that."

"From the general; but we are not dupes."

"Beware, gentlemen; it is not to me you are now giving the lie, it is to your leader."

The officers again looked at each other. Athos continued: "Before your soldiers the general told me to wait a week, and at the expiration of a week he would give me the answer he had to make me. Have I fled away? No; I wait."

"He told you to wait a week!" cried the lieutenant.

"He told me so clearly, Monsieur, that I have a sloop at the mouth of the river, which I could with ease have joined yesterday, and embarked. Now, if I have remained, it was only in compliance with the desire of your general; his Honor having requested me not to depart without a last audience, which he fixed at a week hence. I repeat to you, then, I am waiting."

The lieutenant turned towards the other officers, and said, in a low voice: "If this gentleman speaks truth, there may still be some hope. The general may be carrying out some negotiations so secret that he thought it imprudent to inform even us. Then the time limited for his absence would be a week." Then, turning towards Athos, "Monsieur," said he, "your declaration is of the most serious importance; are you willing to repeat it under the seal of an oath?"

"Monsieur," replied Athos, "I have always lived in a world where my simple word was regarded as the most sacred of oaths."

"This time, however, Monsieur, the circumstance is graver than any you may have been placed in. The safety of the whole army is at stake. Reflect; the general has disappeared, and we are seeking for him. Is this disappearance natural? Has a crime been committed? Are we not bound to carry our investigations to extremity? Have we any right to wait with patience? At this moment everything, Monsieur, depends upon the words you are about to pronounce."

"Interrogated thus, Monsieur, I no longer hesitate," said Athos. "Yes, I came hither to converse confidentially with General Monk, and to ask of him an answer regarding certain interests; yes, the general, being doubtless unable to give it before the expected battle, begged me to remain a week in the house I inhabit, promising me that in a week I should see him again. Yes, all this is true, and I swear it, by the God who is the absolute master of my life and yours." Athos pronounced these words with so much grandeur and solemnity, that the three officers were almost convinced. Nevertheless, one of the colonels made a last attempt.

"Monsieur," said he, "although we may be now per-

suaded of the truth of what you say, there is yet a strange mystery in all this. The general is too prudent a man to have thus abandoned his army on the eve of a battle, without having at least given to one of us a notice of it. As for myself, I cannot believe but that some strange event has been the cause of this disappearance. Yesterday some foreign fishermen came to sell their fish here; they were lodged yonder among the Scots, — that is to say, on the road the general took with this gentleman, to go to the abbey and to return from it. It was one of those fishermen that accompanied the general with a light; and this morning, boat and fishermen have all disappeared, carried away by the night's tide."

"For my part," said the lieutenant, "I see nothing in that which is not quite natural, for these people were not prisoners."

"No; but I repeat that it was one of them who lighted the general and this gentleman in the vault of the abbey, and Digby assures us that the general had strong suspicions concerning those people. Now, who can say whether these people were not connected with this gentleman and that, the blow being struck, the gentleman, who is evidently brave, did not remain to reassure us by his presence, and to prevent our researches being made in the right direction?"

This speech made an impression upon the other officers.

"Monsieur," said Athos, "permit me to tell you that your reasoning, though specious in appearance, nevertheless wants consistency as regards me. I have remained, you say, to divert suspicion. Well! on the contrary, suspicions arise in me as well as in you; and I say it is impossible, gentlemen, that the general, on the eve of a battle, should leave his army without notice to any one. Yes, there is some strange event connected with this;

instead of being idle and waiting, you must display all the activity and all the vigilance possible. I am your prisoner, gentlemen, upon parole or otherwise. My honor is concerned in the ascertaining of what has become of General Monk, and to such a point that if you were to say to me, 'Depart!' I should reply, 'No, I will remain!' and if you were to ask my opinion, I should add, 'Yes, the general is the victim of some conspiracy; for if he had intended to leave the camp he would have told me so.' Seek then, search the land, search the sea; the general has not gone away, or at any rate has not gone voluntarily."

The lieutenant made a sign to the two other officers. "No, Monsieur," said he, "no; in your turn you go too far. The general has nothing to suffer from these events, and no doubt, on the contrary, has directed them. What Monk is now doing he has often done before. We are wrong in alarming ourselves; his absence will doubtless be of short duration. Therefore let us beware of making his absence public by a pusillanimity which the general would consider a crime, and by that means demoralizing the army. The general gives a striking proof of his confidence in us; let us show ourselves worthy of it. Gentlemen, let the most profound silence cover all this with an impenetrable veil; we will detain this gentleman, not from mistrust of him with regard to the crime, but to assure more effectively the secrecy of the absence of the general, and the confinement of it among ourselves; therefore, until fresh orders, the gentleman will remain at headquarters."

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "you forget that last night the general confided to me a deposit over which I am bound to watch. Give me whatever guard you like, enchain me if you like, but leave me the house I inhabit

for my prison. The general on his return would reproach you, I swear on the honor of a gentleman, for having displeased him in this."

The officers consulted together a moment; then, after that consultation, "So be it, Monsieur," said the lieutenant; "return to your abode."

Then they placed over Athos a guard of fifty men, who surrounded his house, without losing sight of him for a minute.

The secret remained secure; but hours, even days, passed away without the general's returning, or without anything being heard of him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONTRABAND GOODS.

Two days after the events we have just related, and while every instant General Monk was looked for in the camp to which he did not return, a little Dutch felucca, manned by eleven men, cast anchor upon the coast of Scheveningen, nearly within cannon-shot of the port. It was night; the darkness was great; the sea rose in the darkness. It was a capital time to land passengers and merchandise.

The road of Scheveningen forms a vast crescent; it is not very deep and not very safe; therefore nothing is seen stationed there but large Flemish boys, or some of those Dutch barks which fishermen draw up on the sand upon rollers, as the ancients did, according to Virgil. When the tide, on rising, ascends and advances on the land, it is not prudent to bring vessels too close in shore; for if the wind is fresh the prows are buried in the sand, and the sand of that coast is spongy, — it receives easily, but does not give up so. It was on this account, no doubt, that a boat was detached from the bark, as soon as the latter had cast anchor, and landed with eight sailors, amidst whom was to be seen an object of an oblong form, a sort of large pannier or bale.

The shore was deserted; the few fishermen inhabiting the dune had gone to bed. The only sentinel that guarded the coast, — a coast very badly guarded, seeing that a landing from large ships was impossible, — without having been able to follow the example of the fishermen

who had gone to bed, imitated them so far that he slept at the back of his watch-box as soundly as they slept in their beds. The only noise to be heard, then, was the whistling of the night-breeze among the bushes and brambles of the dune. But the people who were approaching were doubtless mistrustful people, for this real silence and apparent solitude did not satisfy them. Their boat, therefore, scarcely visible as a dark speck upon the ocean, glided along noiselessly, — the use of oars being avoided for fear of being heard, — and gained the nearest land. Scarcely had it touched the ground when a single man jumped out of the boat, after having given a brief order, with a voice which denoted the habit of commanding. In consequence of this order, several muskets immediately glittered in the feeble light reflected from that mirror of the heavens, the sea; and the oblong bale of which we spoke, containing no doubt some contraband object, was transported to land, with infinite precautions. Immediately after, the man who had landed first, set off in a hasty pace diagonally towards the village of Scheveningen, directing his course to the nearest point of the wood. When there, he sought for that house already described as the temporary residence — and a very humble residence — of him who was styled, by courtesy, King of England. All were asleep there, as everywhere else; only, a large dog, of the race of those which the fishermen of Scheveningen harness to little carts to carry fish to the Hague, began to bark formidably as soon as the stranger's steps were audible beneath the windows. But this watchfulness, instead of alarming the newly landed man, appeared, on the contrary, to give him great joy; for his voice might perhaps have proved insufficient to rouse the people of the house, while, with an auxiliary of that sort, his voice became almost useless. The stranger waited, then, till these re-

iterated and sonorous barkings should, according to all probability, have produced their effect, and then he ventured a summons. On hearing his voice the dog began to roar with such violence that soon another voice was heard from the interior, appeasing that of the dog. With that the dog was quieted.

"What dô you want?" asked the voice, at once weak, broken, and civil.

"I want his Majesty King Charles II.," said the stranger.

"What do you want with him?"

"I want to speak to him."

"Who are you?"

"Ah, *mordioux!* you ask too much; I don't like talking through doors."

"Only tell me your name."

"I don't like to declare my name in the open air, either; besides, you may be sure I shall not eat your dog, and I hope to God he will be as reserved with respect to me."

"You bring news, perhaps, Monsieur, do you not?" replied the voice, patient and questioning, like that of an old man.

"I will answer for it, I bring you news you little expect. Open the door, then, if you please, *hein!*"

"Monsieur," persisted the old man, "do you believe, upon your soul and conscience, that your news will warrant waking the king?"

"For God's sake, my dear monsieur, draw your bolts; you will not be sorry, I swear, for the trouble it will give you. I am worth my weight in gold, upon my honor!"

"Monsieur, I cannot, notwithstanding, open the door till you have told me your name."

"Must I, then?"

"It is by the order of my master, Monsieur."

"Well, my name is — But I warn you my name will tell you absolutely nothing."

"Never mind; tell it, notwithstanding."

"Well, I am the Chevalier d'Artagnan."

The voice on the other side of the door uttered an exclamation.

"Oh! good heavens! M. d'Artagnan! What happiness! I could not help thinking I knew that voice."

"Humph!" said D'Artagnan. "My voice is known here! That 's flattering."

"Oh yes, we know it," said the old man, drawing the bolts; "and here is the proof." And at these words he let in D'Artagnan, who, by the light of the lantern he carried in his hand, recognized his obstinate interlocutor.

"Ah! *mordioux!*" cried he; "why, it is Parry! I ought to have known that."

"Parry, — yes, my dear M. d'Artagnan, it is I. What joy to see you once again!"

"You are right there, — what joy!" said D'Artagnan, pressing the old man's hand. "There, now you 'll go and inform the king, will you not?"

"But the king is asleep, my dear monsieur."

"*Mordioux!* then wake him, He won't scold you for having disturbed him, I will promise you."

"You come on the part of the count, do you not?"

"Of what count?"

"The Comte de la Fère."

"From Athos? My faith! no; I come on my own part. Come, Parry, quick! The king, — I want the king."

Parry did not think it his duty to resist any longer. He had known D'Artagnan long before; he knew that although a Gascon, his words never promised more than

they could stand to. He crossed a court and a little garden, appeased the dog, who seemed seriously to wish to taste the musketeer, and who went howling to the shelter of a chamber forming the ground-floor of a little pavilion. Immediately a little dog inhabiting that chamber replied to the great dog inhabiting the court.

"Poor king!" said D'Artagnan to himself, "these are his body-guards. It is true he is not the worse guarded on that account."

"What is wanted with me?" asked the king, from the back of the chamber.

"Sire, it is M. le Chevalier d'Artagnan, who brings you some news."

A noise was immediately heard in the chamber; a door was opened, and a flood of light inundated the corridor and the garden. The king was working by the light of a lamp. Papers were lying about upon his desk, and he was engaged upon the rough draught of a letter which showed, by the numerous erasures, the trouble he had had in writing it.

"Come in, Monsieur the Chevalier," said he, turning round. Then, perceiving the fisherman, "What do you mean, Parry? Where is M. le Chevalier d'Artagnan?" asked Charles.

"He is before you, Sire," said M. d'Artagnan.

"What! in that costume?"

"Yes; look at me, Sire. Do you not remember having seen me at Blois, in the antechambers of King Louis XIV.?"

"Yes, Monsieur, and I remember I was much pleased with you."

D'Artagnan bowed. "It was my duty to conduct myself as I did, the moment I knew that I had the honor of being near your Majesty."

"You bring me news, do you say?"

"Yes, Sire."

"From the King of France?"

"My faith! no, Sire," replied D'Artagnan. "Your Majesty must have seen yonder that the King of France is occupied only with his own majesty?"

Charles raised his eyes towards heaven.

"No, Sire, no," continued D'Artagnan; "I bring news entirely composed of personal facts. Nevertheless, I hope your Majesty will listen to the facts and news with some favor."

"Speak, Monsieur."

"If I am not mistaken, Sire, your Majesty spoke a great deal at Blois of the embarrassed state of affairs in England."

Charles colored. "Monsieur," said he, "it was to the King of France alone that I related —"

"Oh! your Majesty is mistaken," said the musketeer, coolly. "I know how to speak to kings in misfortune. It is only when they are in misfortune that they speak to me; once fortunate, they look upon me no more. I have, then, for your Majesty not only the greatest respect, but, still more, the most absolute devotion; and that, believe me, with me, Sire, means something. Now, hearing your Majesty complain of your destiny, I found that you were noble and generous, and bore misfortune well."

"In truth," said Charles, much astonished, "I do not know which I ought to prefer, — your freedom or your respect."

"You will choose presently, Sire," said D'Artagnan. "Then your Majesty complained to your brother, Louis XIV., of the difficulty you experienced in returning to England and regaining your throne, for want of men and money."

Charles allowed a movement of impatience to escape him.

"And the principal hindrance your Majesty found in your way," continued D'Artagnan, "was a certain general commanding the armies of the Parliament, and who was playing yonder the part of another Cromwell. Did not your Majesty say so?"

"Yes; but I repeat to you, Monsieur, those words were for the king's ears alone."

"And you will see, Sire, that it is very fortunate that they fell into those of his lieutenant of Musketeers. The man so troublesome to your Majesty was one General Monk, I believe; did I not hear his name correctly, Sire?"

"Yes, Monsieur; but once more, to what purpose are all these questions?"

"Oh! I know very well, Sire, that etiquette will not allow kings to be interrogated. I hope, however, presently you will pardon my want of etiquette. Your Majesty added that, notwithstanding, if you could see him, confer with him, and meet him face to face, you would triumph, either by force or persuasion, over that obstacle, — the only serious one, the only insurmountable one, the only real one you met with on your road."

"All that is true, Monsieur; my destiny, my future, my obscurity, or my glory depends upon that man; but what do you draw from that?"

"One thing alone, — that if this General Monk is troublesome to the point you describe, it would be expedient to get rid of him, your Majesty, or to make an ally of him."

"Monsieur, a king who has neither army nor money, since you have heard my conversation with my brother Louis, has no means of acting against a man like Monk."

"Yes, Sire, that was your opinion, I know very well; but, fortunately for you, it was not mine."

"What do you mean by that?"

"That, without an army and without a million, I have done — I myself — what your Majesty thought could be done only with an army and a million."

"How! What do you say? What have you done?"

"What have I done? Eh! well, Sire, I went yonder to take this man who is so troublesome to your Majesty."

"In England?"

"Exactly, Sire."

"You went to take Monk in England?"

"Should I by chance have done wrong, Sire?"

"In truth, you are mad, Monsieur!"

"Not the least in the world, Sire."

"You have taken Monk?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Where?"

"In the midst of his camp."

The king trembled with impatience.

"And having taken him on the causeway of Newcastle I bring him to your Majesty," said D'Artagnan, simply.

"You bring him to me!" cried the king, almost indignant at what he considered a hoax.

"Yes, Sire," replied D'Artagnan, in the same tone, "I bring him to you; he is down below yonder, in a large chest pierced with holes, so as to allow him to breathe."

"Good God!"

"Oh! don't be uneasy, Sire; we have taken the greatest possible care of him. He comes in good state and in perfect condition. Would your Majesty please to see him, to talk with him, or to have him thrown into the sea?"

"Oh, heavens!" repeated Charles, "oh, heavens! do you speak the truth, Monsieur? Are you not insulting

me with some unworthy pleasantry? You have accomplished this unheard-of act of audacity and genius, — impossible!"

"Will your Majesty permit me to open the window?" said D'Artagnan, opening it.

The king had not time to say yes. D'Artagnan gave a shrill and prolonged whistle, which he repeated three times through the silence of the night.

"There!" said he, "he will be brought to your Majesty."

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN BEGINS TO FEAR HE HAS PLACED HIS MONEY AND THAT OF PLANCHET IN THE SINKING FUND.

THE king could not overcome his surprise, and looked sometimes at the smiling face of the musketeer and sometimes at the dark window which opened into the night. But before he had fixed his ideas, eight of D'Artagnan's men — for two had remained to take care of the boat — brought to the house where Parry received him, that object, of an oblong form, which for the moment enclosed the destinies of England. Before he left Calais, D'Artagnan had had made in that city a sort of coffin, large and deep enough for a man to turn in it at his ease. The bottom and sides, properly mattressed, formed a bed sufficiently soft to prevent the rolling of the ship turning this kind of cage into a rat-trap. The little grating, of which D'Artagnan had spoken to the king, like the visor of a helmet, was placed opposite to the man's face. It was so constructed that, at the least cry, a sudden pressure would stifle that cry, and, if necessary, him who had uttered it. D'Artagnan was so well acquainted with his crew and his prisoner, that during the whole voyage he had been in dread of two things, — either that the general would prefer death to this sort of imprisonment, and would cause himself to be smothered by endeavoring to speak; or that his guards would allow themselves to be tempted by the offers of the prisoner, and put him, D'Artagnan, into the box instead of Monk.

D'Artagnan, therefore, had passed the two days and the two nights of the voyage close to the coffin, alone with the general, offering him wine and food, which he had refused, and constantly endeavoring to reassure him upon the destiny which awaited him at the end of this singular captivity. Two pistols on the table and his naked sword made D'Artagnan easy with regard to indiscretions from without. When once at Scheveningen he had felt completely reassured. His men greatly dreaded any conflict with the lords of the soil. He had, besides, interested in his cause him who had morally served him as lieutenant, and whom we have seen reply to the name of Menneville. The latter, not being a vulgar spirit, had more to risk than the others, because he had more conscience. He had faith in a future in the service of D'Artagnan, and consequently would have allowed himself to be cut to pieces, rather than violate the order given by his leader. Thus it was that, once landed, it was to him D'Artagnan had confided the care of the chest and of the general's respiration. It was he, too, whom he had ordered to have the chest brought by the seven men as soon as he should hear the triple whistle. We have seen that the lieutenant obeyed. The box once in the house, D'Artagnan dismissed his men with a gracious smile, saying, "Messieurs, you have rendered a great service to his Majesty King Charles II., who in less than six weeks will be King of England. Your gratification will then be doubled. Return to the boat and wait for me." Upon which they departed with such shouts of joy as terrified even the dog himself.

D'Artagnan had caused the box to be brought into the king's antechamber. He then, with great care, closed the doors of this antechamber, after which he opened the box, and said to the general: "General, I have

a thousand excuses to make to you. My manner of acting has not been worthy of such a man as you, I know very well; but I wished you to take me for the sea-captain. And then England is a very inconvenient country for transports. I hope, therefore, you will take all that into consideration. But now, General, you are at liberty to get up and walk." This said, he cut the bonds which fastened the arms and hands of the general. The latter got up, and then sat down with the countenance of a man who expects death. D'Artagnan opened the door of Charles's cabinet, and said, "Sire, here is your enemy, M. Monk; I promised myself to perform this service for your Majesty. It is done; now order as you please. M. Monk," added he, turning towards the prisoner, "you are in the presence of his Majesty Charles II., sovereign lord of Great Britain."

Monk raised towards the prince his coldly stoical look, and replied: "I know no king of Great Britain; I recognize even here no one worthy of bearing the name of gentleman: for it is in the name of King Charles II. that an emissary, whom I took for an honest man, has come and laid an infamous snare for me. I have fallen into that snare; so much the worse for me. Now, you the tempter," said he to the king, "you the executor," said he to D'Artagnan, "remember what I am about to say to you: you have my body, you may kill it; and I urge you to do so, for you shall never have my mind or my will. And now, ask me not a single word, for from this moment I will not open my mouth even to cry out. I have said."

General Monk pronounced these words with the savage, invincible resolution of a Puritan in a state of great indignation. D'Artagnan looked at his prisoner like a man who knows the value of every word, and who fixes that value according to the accent with which it has been pronounced.

"The fact is," said he, in a whisper to the king, "the general is an obstinate man; he would not take a mouthful of bread, nor swallow a drop of wine, during the two days of our voyage. But as from this moment it is your Majesty who must decide his fate, I wash my hands of him."

Monk, erect, pale, and resigned, waited with his eyes fixed and his arms folded. D'Artagnan turned towards him. "You will please to understand perfectly," said he, "that your speech, otherwise very fine, does not suit anybody, not even yourself. His Majesty wished to speak to you; you refused him an interview. Why, now that you are face to face, that you are here by a force independent of your will, — why do you confine yourself to rigors which I consider as useless and absurd? Speak! what the devil! speak, if only to say 'No.'"

Monk did not unclose his lips; he did not turn his eyes; he stroked his mustache with a thoughtful air, which announced that matters were going on badly.

During all this time Charles II. had fallen into a profound reverie. For the first time he found himself face to face with Monk, — that is to say, with the man he had so much desired to see; and with that peculiar glance which God has given to eagles and kings, he had fathomed the abyss of his heart. He beheld Monk, then, resolved positively to die rather than speak, — which was not to be wondered at in so considerable a man, the wound in whose mind must at the moment have been severe. Charles II. formed, on the instant, one of those resolutions upon which an ordinary man stakes his life, a general his fortune, and a king his kingdom. "Monsieur," said he to Monk, "you are perfectly right upon certain points; I do not, therefore, ask you to answer me, but to listen to me."

There was a moment's silence, during which the king looked at Monk, who remained impassive.

"You have made me just now a painful reproach, Monsieur," continued the king; "you said that one of my emissaries had been to Newcastle to lay a snare for you; and that, by the way, cannot be understood by M. d'Artagnan here, and to whom, before everything, I owe sincere thanks for his generous, his heroic devotion."

D'Artagnan bowed with respect; Monk took no notice.

"For M. d'Artagnan, — and observe, M. Monk, I do not say this to excuse myself, — for M. d'Artagnan," continued the king, "has gone into England on his own proper movement, without interest, without orders, without hope, like a true gentleman as he is, to render a service to an unfortunate king, and to add to the illustrious actions of an existence already so well filled, one fine action more."

D'Artagnan colored a little, and coughed to keep his countenance. Monk did not stir.

"You do not believe what I tell you, M. Monk," continued the king. "I can understand that; such proofs of devotion are so rare, that their reality may well be put in doubt."

"Monsieur would do wrong not to believe you, Sire," cried D'Artagnan; "for that which your Majesty has said is the exact truth, and the truth so exact that it appears, in going to fetch the general, I have done something which sets everything wrong. In truth, if it be so, I am in despair."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the king, pressing the hand of the musketeer, "you have obliged me more than if you had promoted the success of my cause; for you have revealed to me an unknown friend, to whom I shall ever be grateful, and whom I shall always love;

and," continued he, bowing to Monk, "an enemy whom I shall henceforth esteem at his proper value."

The eyes of the Puritan flashed, but only once; and his countenance, for an instant illumined by that flash, resumed its sombre impassiveness.

"Then, M. d'Artagnan," continued Charles, "this is what was about to happen; M. le Comte de la Fère, — whom you know, I believe, — has set out for Newcastle."

"Athos?" exclaimed D'Artagnan.

"Yes; that was his *nom de guerre*, I believe. The Comte de la Fère had, then, set out for Newcastle, and was going, perhaps, to bring the general to hold a conference with me or with those of my party, when you violently, as it appears, interfered with the negotiation."

"*Mordioux!*" replied D'Artagnan, "it was he, without doubt, who entered the camp the very evening in which I succeeded in getting into it with my fishermen — "

An almost imperceptible frown on the brow of Monk told D'Artagnan that he had surmised rightly.

"Yes, yes," muttered he; "I thought I knew his person; I even fancied I knew his voice. Unlucky wretch that I am! Oh, Sire, pardon me! I thought I had so successfully steered my bark."

"There is nothing ill in it, Monsieur," said the king, "except that the general accuses me of having laid a snare for him, which is not the case. No, General, those are not the arms which I contemplated employing with you, as you will soon see. In the mean while, when I give you my word upon the honor of a gentleman, believe me, Monsieur, believe me! Now, M. d'Artagnan, a word with you, if you please."

"I listen on my knees, Sire."

"You are truly at my service, are you not?"

"Your Majesty has seen that I am, — too much so."

"That is well; from a man like you one word suffices. In addition to that word you bring actions. General, have the goodness to follow me. Come with us, M. d'Artagnan."

D'Artagnan, considerably surprised, prepared to obey. Charles II. went out, Monk following him; D'Artagnan followed Monk. Charles took the path by which D'Artagnan had come to his abode, the fresh sea breezes soon saluted the faces of the three nocturnal travellers, and, at fifty paces from the little gate which Charles opened, they found themselves upon the dune in face of the ocean, which, having ceased to rise, reposed upon the shore like a monster fatigued. Charles II. walked along pensively, his head hanging down and his hand beneath his cloak. Monk followed him, with crossed arms and an uneasy look. D'Artagnan came last, with his hand on the hilt of his sword.

"Where is the boat in which you came, gentlemen?" said Charles to the musketeer.

"Yonder, Sire; I have seven men and an officer waiting for me in that little boat which is lighted by a fire."

"Yes, I see; the boat is drawn up upon the sand. But you certainly did not come from Newcastle in that frail bark?"

"No, Sire; I hired a felucca on my own account, which is at anchor within cannon shot of the dunes. It was in that felucca we made the voyage."

"Monsieur," said the king to Monk, "you are free."

However firm of will, Monk could not suppress an exclamation. The king added an affirmative motion of his head, and continued: "We will waken a fisherman of the village, who will put his boat to sea immediately, and will

take you back to any place you may command him. M. d'Artagnan here will escort your Honor. I place M. d'Artagnan under the safeguard of your loyalty, M. Monk."

Monk allowed a murmur of surprise to escape him, and D'Artagnan a profound sigh. The king, without appearing to notice either, knocked against the deal trellis which enclosed the cabin of the principal fisherman inhabiting the dune.

"Holloa! Keyser!" cried he, "awake!"

"Who calls me?" asked the fisherman.

"I, — Charles, the king."

"Ah! my Lord," cried Keyser, rising ready dressed from the sail in which he slept as people sleep in a hammock; "what can I do to serve you?"

"Captain Keyser," said Charles, "you must set sail immediately. Here is a traveller who wishes to freight your bark, and will pay you well; use him well;" and the king drew back a few steps to allow Monk to speak to the fisherman.

"I wish to cross over into England," said Monk, who spoke Dutch enough to make himself understood.

"This minute," said the captain, — "this very minute, if you wish it."

"But will that be long?" said Monk.

"Not half an hour, your Honor. My eldest son is at this moment preparing the boat, as we were going out fishing at three o'clock in the morning."

"Well, is all arranged?" asked the king, drawing near.

"All but the price," said the fisherman; "yes, Sire."

"That is my affair," said Charles; "the gentleman is my friend."

Monk started and looked at Charles, on hearing this word.

"Very well, my Lord," replied Keyser; and at that moment they heard Keyser's eldest son, signalling from the shore with the blast of a bull's horn.

"Now, gentlemen," said the king, "be gone!"

"Sire," said D'Artagnan, "will it please your Majesty to grant me a few minutes? I have engaged men, and I am going without them; I must give them notice."

"Whistle to them," said Charles, smiling.

D'Artagnan accordingly whistled, while Captain Keyser replied to his son; and four men, led by Menneville, attended the first summons.

"Here is some money on account," said D'Artagnan, putting into their hands a purse containing twenty-five hundred livres in gold. "Go and wait for me at Calais; you know where;" and D'Artagnan heaved a profound sigh as he let the purse fall into the hands of Menneville.

"What! are you leaving us?" cried the men.

"For a short time," said D'Artagnan, "or for a long time, who knows? But with twenty-five hundred livres, and the twenty-five hundred you have already received, you are paid according to our agreement. We are quits, then, my friends."

"But the boat?"

"Do not trouble yourself about that."

"Our things are on board the felucca."

"Go and seek them, and afterwards set off immediately."

"Yes, Captain."

D'Artagnan returned to Monk, saying, "Monsieur, I await your orders; for I understand we are to go together, unless my company be disagreeable to you."

"On the contrary, Monsieur," said Monk.

"Come, gentlemen, on board," said Keyser's son.

Charles bowed to the general with grace and dignity, saying, "You will pardon me this unfortunate accident, and the violence to which you have been subjected, when you are convinced that I was not the cause of them."

Monk bowed profoundly without replying. On his side Charles affected not to say a word to D'Artagnan in private, but aloud: "Once more, thanks, Monsieur the Chevalier," said he, "thanks for your services. They will be repaid you by the Lord God, who, I hope, reserves for me alone trials and troubles."

Monk followed Keyser and his son, and embarked with them. D'Artagnan came after, muttering to himself, "Ah, my poor Planchet! I am very much afraid we have made a bad speculation."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SHARES OF PLANCHET AND COMPANY RISE AGAIN TO PAR.

DURING the passage Monk spoke to D'Artagnan only in cases of urgent necessity. Thus, when the Frenchman hesitated to come and take his repast, — a poor repast composed of salt fish, biscuit, and Hollands gin, — Monk called him, saying, "To table, Monsieur!" This was all. D'Artagnan, because he himself was on all great occasions extremely concise, did not draw from the general's conciseness a favorable augury of the result of his mission. Now, as he had plenty of time for reflection, he battered his brains during this time in endeavoring to find out how Athos had seen King Charles, how he had planned with him that expedition, and lastly, how he had entered Monk's camp; and the poor lieutenant of Musketeers plucked a hair from his mustache every time he reflected that the cavalier who accompanied Monk on the night of the famous abduction must have been Athos. At length, after a passage of two nights and two days, Captain Keyser touched the point where Monk, who had given all orders during the voyage, had commanded they should land. It was exactly at the mouth of the little river near which Athos had chosen his abode. Day was declining; a splendid sun, like a red steel buckler, was plunging the lower extremity of his disk under the blue line of the sea. The felucca was making fair way up the river, tolerably wide in that part; but Monk, in his

impatience, desired to be landed, and Keyser's boat placed him and D'Artagnan upon the muddy bank, amidst the reeds. D'Artagnan, resigned to obedience, followed Monk exactly as a chained bear follows his master; but the position humiliated him not a little, and he grumbled to himself that the service of kings was a bitter one, and that the best of them was good for nothing. Monk walked with long and hasty strides, it might be thought that he did not yet feel certain of having regained English soil. They had already begun to perceive distinctly a few of the cottages of the sailors and fishermen spread over the little quay of this humble port, when, all at once, D'Artagnan cried out, "God pardon me, there is a house on fire!"

Monk raised his eyes, and perceived that there was, in fact, a house which the flames were beginning to devour. It had begun at a little shed belonging to the house, the roof of which it had seized upon. The fresh evening breeze increased the flame. The two travellers quickened their steps, hearing loud cries, and seeing, as they drew nearer, soldiers with their glittering arms pointing towards the house on fire. It was, doubtless, this menacing occupation which had made them neglect to signal the felucca. Monk stopped short for an instant, and for the first time formulated his thoughts in words. "Eh! but," said he, "perhaps they are not my soldiers, but Lambert's."

These words contained at once a pain, an apprehension, and a reproach perfectly intelligible to D'Artagnan. In fact, during the general's absence, Lambert might have given battle, conquered, and dispersed the Parliament's army, and taken with his own the place of Monk's army, deprived of its strongest support. At this doubt, which passed from the mind of Monk to his own, D'Artagnan

made this reasoning: "One of two things is going to happen: either Monk has spoken correctly, and there are no longer any but Lambertists in the country, — that is to say, enemies who would receive me wonderfully well, since it is to me they owe their victory, — or nothing is changed, and Monk, transported with joy at finding his camp still in the same place, will not prove too severe in his reprisals." While thinking thus, the two travellers advanced, and found themselves surrounded by a little knot of sailors, who looked on with sorrow at the burning house, but did not dare to say anything, on account of the menaces of the soldiers. Monk addressed one of these sailors. "What is going on here?" asked he.

"Monsieur," replied the man, not recognizing Monk as an officer, under the thick cloak which enveloped him, "that house was inhabited by a foreigner, and this foreigner became suspected by the soldiers. Then they wanted to get into his house under the pretence of taking him to the camp; but he, without being frightened by their numbers, threatened death to the first who should cross the threshold of his door; and as there was one who did venture, the Frenchman stretched him on the earth with a pistol-shot."

"Ah! he is a Frenchman, is he?" said D'Artagnan, rubbing his hands. "Good!"

"How good?" replied the fishermen.

"No, I don't mean that. Next?— my tongue tripped."

"Next, Monsieur? Why, the other men became as enraged as so many lions; they fired more than a hundred shots at the house; but the Frenchman was sheltered by the wall, and every time they tried to enter by the door they met with a shot from his lackey, whose aim is deadly, d'ye see? Every time they threatened the

window, they met with a pistol shot from the master. Look and count; there are seven men down."

"Ah! my brave compatriot," cried D'Artagnan, "wait a little, wait a little. I will be with you; and we will give an account of all this rabble."

"One instant, Monsieur," said Monk; "wait."

"Long?"

"No; only time to ask a question." Then, turning towards the sailor, "My friend," asked he, with an emotion which, in spite of all his self-command, he could not conceal, "whose soldiers are these, pray tell me?"

"Whose should they be but that madman Monk's?"

"There has been no battle, then?"

"A battle, yes! but with what result? Lambert's army is melting away like snow in April. All come to Monk, officers and soldiers. In a week Lambert won't have fifty men left"

The fisherman was interrupted by a fresh salvo of musketry discharged against the house, and by another pistol-shot which replied to the salvo, and struck down the most daring of the aggressors. The rage of the soldiers was at its height. The fire still continued to increase, and a crest of flame and smoke whirled and spread over the roof of the house. D'Artagnan could no longer contain himself. "*Mordioux!*" said he to Monk, glancing at him sideways; "are you a general, and allow your men to burn houses and assassinate people, while you look on and warm your hands at the blaze of the conflagration? *Mordioux!* you are not a man."

"Patience, Monsieur, patience!" said Monk, smiling.

"Patience! yes, until that brave gentleman is roasted —is that what you mean?" and D'Artagnan rushed forward.

"Remain where you are, Monsieur," said Monk, in a tone of command; and he advanced towards the house just as an officer had approached it, who said to the besieged: "The house is burning; you will be grilled within an hour! There is still time, — come, tell us what you know of General Monk, and we will spare your life. Reply, or by St. Patrick —"

The besieged made no answer; he was no doubt reloading his pistol.

"They have gone for reinforcements," continued the officer; "in a quarter of an hour there will be a hundred men round your house."

"I reply to you!" said the Frenchman. "Let your men be sent away; I will come out freely and repair to the camp alone, or else I will be killed here!"

"*Mille tonnerres!*" shouted D'Artagnan; "why, that 's the voice of Athos! Ah, villains!" and the sword of D'Artagnan flamed from its sheath.

Monk stopped him, and advanced himself, exclaiming, in a sonorous voice: "Hollos! what is going on here? Digby, whence is this fire? why these cries?"

"The general!" cried Digby, letting the point of his sword fall.

"The general!" repeated the soldiers.

"Well, what is there so astonishing in that?" said Monk, in a calm tone. Then, silence being re-established, "Now," said he, "who lit this fire?"

The soldiers hung down their heads.

"What! do I ask a question and nobody answers me?" said Monk. "What! do I find a fault, and nobody repairs it? The fire is still burning, I believe."

Immediately the twenty men rushed forward, seizing pails, buckets, jars, barrels, and extinguishing the fire with as much ardor as they had, an instant before,

employed in promoting it. But already, and before all the rest, D'Artagnan had applied a ladder to the house, crying, "Athos! it is I, it is I, D'Artagnan! Do not kill me, dear friend!" and in a moment the count was clasped in his arms.

In the mean time Grimaud, preserving his calm air, dismantled the fortification of the ground floor, and after having opened the door, stood, with his arms crossed, quietly on the threshold. Only, at hearing the voice of D'Artagnan, he had uttered an exclamation of surprise. The fire being extinguished, the soldiers presented themselves abashed, Digby at their head.

"General," said he, "excuse us; what we have done was for the love of your Honor, whom we thought lost."

"You are mad, gentlemen. Lost! Is a man like me to be lost? Am I not, by chance, to be permitted to be absent, according to my pleasure, without giving formal notice? Do you, by chance, take me for a citizen from the city? Is a gentleman, my friend, my guest, to be besieged, entrapped, and threatened with death because he is suspected? What signifies that word, 'suspected'? God damn me if I don't have every one of you shot that the brave gentleman has left alive!"

"General," said Digby, piteously, "there were twenty-eight of us; and see, there are eight on the ground."

"I authorize M. le Comte de la Fère to send the twenty to join the eight," said Monk, stretching out his hand to Athos. "Let them return to camp. Digby, you will consider yourself under arrest for a month."

"General —"

"That is to teach you, Monsieur, not to act another time without orders."

"I had those of the lieutenant, General."

"The lieutenant has no such orders to give you; and he shall be placed under arrest, instead of you, if he has really commanded you to burn this gentleman."

"He did not command that, General; he commanded us to bring him to the camp; but the count was not willing to follow us."

"I was not willing that they should enter and plunder my house," said Athos to Monk, with a significant look.

"And you were quite right. — To the camp, I say." The soldiers departed with dejected looks. "Now we are alone," said Monk to Athos, "have the goodness to tell me, Monsieur, why you persisted in remaining here while you had your felucca — "

"I waited for you, General," said Athos. "Had not your Honor appointed me a meeting in a week?"

An eloquent look from D'Artagnan made it clear to Monk that these two men, so brave and so loyal, had not acted in concert for his abduction. He knew already that it could not be so.

"Monsieur," said he to D'Artagnan, "you were perfectly right. Have the kindness to allow me a moment's conversation with M. le Comte de la Fère."

D'Artagnan took advantage of this to go and ask Grimaud how he did. Monk requested Athos to conduct him to the chamber he lived in.

This chamber was still full of smoke and rubbish. More than fifty balls had passed through the windows and mutilated the walls. They found a table, inkstand, and materials for writing. Monk took up a pen, wrote a single line, signed it, folded the paper, sealed the letter with the seal of his ring, and passed over the missive to Athos, saying, "Monsieur, carry, if you please, this letter to King Charles II., and set out immediately, if nothing detains you here any longer."

"And the casks?" said Athos.

"The fisherman who brought me hither will assist you in transporting them on board. Be gone, if possible, within an hour."

"Yes, General," said Athos.

"M. d'Artagnan!" cried Monk, from the window. D'Artagnan ran up precipitately. "Embrace your friend and bid him adieu, Monsieur; he is returning to Holland"

"To Holland!" cried D'Artagnan; "and I?"

"You are at liberty to follow him, Monsieur; but I request you to remain," said Monk. "Will you refuse me?"

"Oh no, General; I am at your orders."

D'Artagnan embraced Athos, and had only time to bid him adieu. Monk watched them both. Then he took upon himself the preparations for the departure, the carrying of the casks on board, and the embarkation of Athos; then, taking D'Artagnan by the arm, who was quite amazed and agitated, he led him towards Newcastle. While going along, arm in arm with Monk, D'Artagnan could not help murmuring to himself, "Come, come, it seems to me that the shares of the house of Planchet & Co. are rising."

CHAPTER XXXI.

MONK REVEALS HIMSELF.

D'ARTAGNAN, although he flattered himself with better success, had, nevertheless, not too well comprehended his situation. It was a strange and grave subject for him to reflect upon, — this voyage of Athos into England; this league of the king with Athos, and that extraordinary combination of his design with that of the Comte de la Fère. The best way was to let things follow their own train. An imprudence had been committed; and while having succeeded as he had promised, D'Artagnan found that he had gained no advantage by his success. Since everything was lost, he could risk no more. D'Artagnan followed Monk to the middle of his camp. The return of the general had produced a marvellous effect, for his people had thought him lost. But Monk, with his austere look and icy demeanor, appeared to ask of his eager lieutenants and delighted soldiers the cause of all this joy. Therefore to the lieutenant who had come to meet him, and who expressed the uneasiness with which they had learned his departure, "Why is all this?" said he; "am I obliged to render an account of myself to you?"

"But, your Honor, the sheep may well tremble without the shepherd."

"Tremble!" replied Monk, with his calm and powerful voice; "ah, Monsieur, what a word! Curse me! if my sheep have not both teeth and claws, I renounce being their shepherd. Ah! you tremble, Monsieur!"

"Yes, General, for you."

"Oh, pray meddle with your own concerns! If I have not the wit God gave to Oliver Cromwell, I have that which he has sent to me; I am satisfied with it, however little it may be."

The officer made no reply; and, Monk having imposed silence on his people, all remained persuaded that he had accomplished some important work, or had tried an experiment upon them. This was forming a very poor conception of his patient and scrupulous genius. Monk, if he had the good faith of the Puritans, his allies, must have returned thanks with much fervor to the patron saint who had taken him from the box of M. d'Artagnan.

While these things were going on, our musketeer could not help constantly repeating: "God grant that M. Monk may not have as much self love as I have; for I declare, if any one had put me into a box with that grating over my mouth, and carried me so packed up, like a calf, across the seas, I should retain such an ill remembrance of my pitiful appearance in that box, and such a deadly hatred against him who had enclosed me in it, — I should so much dread to see a sarcastic smile blooming upon the face of the malicious wretch, or in his attitude some grotesque imitation of my position in the box, — that, *mordioux!* I should plunge a good poniard into his throat in compensation of the grating, and should nail him down in a veritable bier, in remembrance of the false coffin in which I had been left two days to gather mould." And D'Artagnan spoke honestly when he spoke thus; for the skin of our Gascon was very thin. Monk, fortunately, entertained other ideas. He never opened his mouth concerning the past to his timid conqueror; but he admitted him very near to his person in his labors, took him with him to several *reconnoissances*, in such a way as

to obtain that which he evidently warmly desired, — a rehabilitation in the mind of D'Artagnan. The latter conducted himself like a passed master in the art of flattery: he admired all Monk's tactics, and the ordering of his camp; he joked very pleasantly upon the circumvallations of Lambert, who had, he said, very uselessly given himself the trouble to enclose a camp for twenty thousand men, while an acre of ground would have been quite sufficient for the corporal and fifty guards who would perhaps remain faithful to him. Monk, immediately after his arrival, had accepted the proposition which was made by Lambert, the evening before, for an interview, and which Monk's lieutenants had refused, under the pretext that the general was indisposed. This interview was neither long nor interesting. Lambert demanded a profession of faith of his rival. The latter declared he had no other opinion but that of the majority. Lambert asked if it would not be more expedient to terminate the quarrel by an alliance than by a battle. Monk thereupon required a week for consideration. Now, Lambert could not refuse this; even though he had come saying that he should devour the army of Monk. Therefore, as at the end of the interview, which Lambert's party awaited with impatience, nothing was decided, — neither treaty nor battle, — the rebel army, as M. d'Artagnan had foreseen, began to prefer the good cause to the bad one, and the Parliament, "Rump" though it was, to the pompous nothings of the designs of Lambert. They remembered, likewise, the good repasts of London, — the profusion of ale and sherry with which the citizens of London paid their friends the soldiers; they looked with terror at the black war bread, at the troubled waters of the Tweed, — too salt for the glass, not enough so for the pot; and they said to themselves, "Shall we not be better off on the

other side? Are not the roast meats kept warm for Monk in London?" From that time nothing but desertion was heard of in Lambert's army. The soldiers allowed themselves to be drawn away by the force of principles, which are, like discipline, the obligatory tie in everybody constituted for any purpose. Monk defended the Parliament; Lambert attacked it. Monk had no more inclination to support the Parliament than Lambert had; but he had it inscribed upon his standards, so that all those of the contrary party were reduced to write upon theirs, "Rebellion," which sounded ill in Puritan ears. They flocked, then, from Lambert to Monk, as sinners flock from Baal to God.

Monk made his calculations: at a thousand desertions a day Lambert had men enough to last twenty days; but there is in falling masses such increase at once of weight and rapidity of motion, that a hundred left the first day, five hundred the second, a thousand the third. Monk thought he had obtained his rate. But from a thousand the desertion passed quickly on to two thousand, then to four thousand; and, eight days after, Lambert, perceiving that he had no longer the possibility of accepting battle, if it were offered to him, took the wise resolution of decamping during the night, to return to London, and be beforehand with Monk in constructing a power with the wreck of the military party. But Monk, free and without inquietude, marched towards London as a conqueror, augmenting his army from all the floating parties on his passage. He encamped at Barnet, — that is to say, within four leagues of the capital, — cherished by the Parliament, which thought it beheld in him a protector, and looked for by the people, who were anxious to see him reveal himself, that they might judge him. D'Artagnan himself had not been able to fathom his tactics: he observed,

he admired. Monk could not enter London with a settled determination without encountering civil war. He temporized for a short time. Suddenly, without anybody expecting it, Monk drove the military party out of London, and installed himself in the city amidst the citizens, by order of the Parliament; then, at the moment when the citizens were crying out against Monk, — at the moment when the soldiers themselves were accusing their leader, — Monk, finding himself certain of a majority, declared to the Rump Parliament that it must abdicate, be dissolved, and yield its place to a government which would not be a joke. Monk pronounced this declaration, supported by fifty thousand swords, to which, that same evening, were united, with hurrahs of delirious joy, five hundred thousand inhabitants of the good city of London. At length, at the moment when the people, after their triumphs and festive repasts in the open streets, were looking about for a master, it was affirmed that a vessel had left the Hague, bearing Charles II. and his fortunes.

"Gentlemen," said Monk to his officers, "I am going to meet the legitimate king. He who loves me will follow me." A burst of acclamations welcomed these words, which D'Artagnan heard with the greatest delight.

"*Mordioux!*" said he to Monk, "that is bold, Monsieur."

"You will accompany me, will you not?" said Monk.

"*Pardieu!* General. But tell me, I beg, what you wrote by Athos, — that is to say, the Comte de la Fère, — you know, — the day of our arrival?"

"I have no secrets for you now," replied Monk. "I wrote these words: 'Sire, I expect your Majesty in six weeks at Dover.'"

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, "I no longer say it is bold; I say it is well played, it is a fine stroke!"

"You are something of a judge in such matters," replied Monk.

And this was the only time the general ever made an allusion to his voyage to Holland.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ATHOS AND D'ARTAGNAN MEET ONCE MORE AT THE HOSTELRY OF THE STAG'S HORN.

THE King of England made his *entrée* into Dover with great pomp, as he afterwards did into London. He had sent for his brothers; he had brought over his mother and sister. England had been for so long a time given up to herself, — that is to say, to tyranny, mediocrity, and madness, — that this return of Charles II., whom the English only knew as the son of the man whose head they had cut off, was a festival for the three kingdoms. Consequently, all the vows, all the acclamations, which accompanied his return, struck the young king so forcibly, that he stooped towards the ear of James of York, his younger brother, and said, "In truth, James, it appears to have been our own fault that we were so long absent from a country where we are so much beloved!" The *cortége* was magnificent. Beautiful weather favored the solemnity. Charles had regained all his youth, all his good humor; he appeared to be transfigured; hearts seemed to smile upon him like the sun. Amid this obstreperous crowd of courtiers and worshippers, who did not appear to remember they had conducted to the scaffold at Whitehall the father of the new king, a man, in the garb of a lieutenant of Musketeers, looked, with a smile upon his thin, intellectual lips, sometimes at the people vociferating their good wishes, and sometimes at the prince, who pretended emotion, and who bowed most

particularly to the women, whose bouquets were strewed before his horse's feet. "What a fine trade is that of a king!" said this man, drawn away by his contemplation, and so completely absorbed that he stopped in the middle of the road, leaving the *cortége* to file past. "Now, there is, in good truth, a prince all stitched over with gold and diamonds like a Solomon, enamelled with flowers like a spring meadow; he is about to draw with full hands from the immense coffer in which his now faithful — so lately unfaithful — subjects have amassed one or two cart-loads of ingots of gold. They cast bouquets enough upon him to smother him; and yet, if he had presented himself to them two months ago, they would have sent as many bullets and balls at him as they now throw flowers. Decidedly it is worth something to be born in a certain fashion, — with deference to those of low birth who claim that low birth is of little consequence." The *cortége* continued to file on; and, with the king, the acclamations began to die away in the direction of the palace, which, however, did not prevent our officer from being shoved about.

"*Mordioux!*" continued the reasoner, "these people tread upon my toes and look upon me as of very little consequence, or rather of none at all, seeing that they are Englishmen and I am a Frenchman. If all these people were asked, 'Who is M. d'Artagnan?' they would reply, '*Nescio vos.*' But let any one say to them, 'There is the king going by; there is M. Monk going by,' they would yell out, '*Vive le roi! Vive M. Monk!*' till their lungs were exhausted. And yet," continued he, surveying the moving crowd with that look sometimes so keen and sometimes so proud, — "and yet, reflect a little, my good people, on what your king has done, on what M. Monk has done, and then think what has been

done by this poor unknown, who is called M. d'Artagnan! It is true you do not know him, since he is unknown; which perhaps prevents your thinking about the matter. But, bah! what matters it! All that does not prevent Charles II. from being a great king, although he has been exiled twelve years; or M. Monk from being a great captain, although he did make a voyage to Holland in a box. Well, then, since it is admitted that one is a great king and the other a great captain, — 'Hurrah for King Charles II.! Hurrah for General Monk!'" and his voice mingled with the voices of the thousands of spectators, over which it dominated for a moment. Then, the better to play the devoted man, he took off his hat and waved it in the air. Some one seized his arm in the very height of his expansive loyalism (in 1660 that which we now call royalism was so termed).

"Athos!" cried D'Artagnan, "you here!" and the two friends embraced.

"You here! — and being here," continued the musketeer, "you are not in the midst of all those courtiers, my dear count! What! you, the hero of the *fête*, you are not prancing on the left hand of the king, as M. Monk is prancing on the right? In truth, I cannot comprehend your character, nor that of the prince who owes you so much!"

"Still a railer! my dear D'Artagnan!" said Athos. "Will you never correct yourself of that vile habit?"

"But you do not form part of the *cortége?*"

"I do not, because I was not willing to do so."

"And why were you not willing?"

"Because I am neither envoy nor ambassador nor representative of the King of France; and it does not become me to exhibit myself thus near the person of another king than the one God has given me for a master."

"*Mordioux!* you came very near to the person of the king, his father."

"That was another thing, my friend; he was about to die."

"And yet that which you did for him —"

"I did because it was my duty to do it. But you know I hate all ostentation. Let King Charles II., then, who no longer stands in need of me, leave me to my repose and in the shade; that is all I claim of him."

D'Artagnan sighed.

"What is the matter with you?" said Athos. "One would say that this happy return of the king to London saddens you, my friend, — you who have done at least as much for his Majesty as I have."

"Have I not," replied D'Artagnan, with his Gascon laugh, — "have I not done much for his Majesty, without any one suspecting it?"

"Yes, yes; but the king is well aware of it, my friend," cried Athos.

"He is aware of it!" said the musketeer, bitterly. "By my faith! I did not suspect so, and I was even, a moment ago, trying to forget it myself."

"But he, my friend, will not forget it; I will answer for him."

"You tell me that to console me a little, Athos."

"For what?"

"*Mordioux!* for the loss of all the money I have spent. I have ruined myself, my friend, — ruined myself for the restoration of this young prince who has just passed, capering upon his dun horse."

"The king does not know you have ruined yourself, my friend; but he knows he owes you much."

"And say, Athos, does that advance me in any respect? I do you justice, — you have labored nobly; but

I — I, who in appearance marred your combinations, — it was I who really made them succeed. Follow my calculations closely: you might not, by persuasion or mildness, have convinced General Monk, while I have so roughly treated this dear general, that I furnished your prince with an opportunity of showing himself generous; this generosity was inspired in him by the fact of my fortunate mistake, and Charles is paid by the restoration which Monk has brought about."

"All that, my dear friend, is strikingly true," replied Athos.

"Well, strikingly true as it may be, it is not less true, my friend, that I shall return, — greatly noticed by M. Monk, who calls me 'My dear captain' all day long, although I am neither dear to him nor a captain; and strongly appreciated by the king, who has already forgotten my name, — it is not less true, I say, that I shall return to my beautiful country, cursed by the soldiers I had raised with promise of large pay, cursed by the brave Planchet, of whom I borrowed a part of his fortune."

"How is that? What the devil had Planchet to do in all this?"

"Ay, yes, my friend. This king, so spruce, so smiling, so adored, — M. Monk fancies he has recalled him, you fancy you have supported him, I fancy I have brought him back, the people fancy they have re-conquered him, he himself fancies he has negotiated so as to be restored; and yet nothing of all this is true, for Charles II., King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, has been replaced upon the throne by a French grocer, who lives in the Rue des Lombards, and is named Planchet. And such is grandeur! 'Vanity!' says the Scripture, 'vanity, all is vanity.'"

Athos could not help laughing at this whimsical outbreak of his friend.

"My dear D'Artagnan," said he, pressing his hand affectionately, "should you not exercise a little more philosophy? Is it not some further satisfaction to you to have saved my life as you did by arriving so fortunately with Monk, when those damned parliamentarians wanted to burn me alive?"

"Well, but you, in some degree, deserved burning a little, my dear count."

"How so? — for having saved King Charles's million?"

"What million?"

"Ah, that is true! you never knew that, my friend; but you must not be angry, for it was not my secret. That word 'Remember' which the king pronounced upon the scaffold —"

"And which means *Souviens toi!*"

"Exactly. It meant this: 'Remember there is a million buried in the vaults of Newcastle Abbey, and that that million belongs to my son.'"

"Ah! very well, I understand. But what I understand likewise, and what is very frightful is, that every time his Majesty Charles II. will think of me, he will say to himself: 'There is the man who was near making me lose my crown. Fortunately I was generous, great, full of presence of mind.' This is what the young gentleman in a shabby black doublet will say, who came to the château of Blois, hat in hand, to ask me if I would grant him access to the King of France."

"D'Artagnan! D'Artagnan!" said Athos, laying his hand on the shoulder of the musketeer, "you are unjust."

"I am right."

"No; for you are ignorant of the future."

D'Artagnan looked his friend full in the face, and began

to laugh. "In truth, my dear Athos," said he, "you speak some words so superb, that they belong only to you and M. le Cardinal Mazarin."

Athos made a movement.

"I beg your pardon," continued D'Artagnan, laughing,—"I beg your pardon, if I have offended you. The future! Bah! Words that promise are pretty words, and how well they fill the mouth in default of other things! *Mordioux!* After having met with so many who promise, when shall I find one who gives! But let that pass!" continued D'Artagnan. "What are you doing here, my dear Athos? Are you king's treasurer?"

"What!—king's treasurer?"

"Well; since the king possesses a million, he must want a treasurer. The King of France, although he is not worth a sou, has still an intendant of finance, M. Fouquet. It is true that, in exchange, M. Fouquet has a good number of millions of his own."

"Oh! our million is spent long ago," said Athos, laughing in his turn.

"I understand; it was frittered away in satin, precious stones, velvet, and feathers of all sorts and colors. All these princes and princesses stood in great need of tailors and dressmakers. Eh! Athos, do you remember what we fellows expended in equipping ourselves for the campaign of La Rochelle, and to make our appearance on horseback? Two or three thousand livres, by my faith! But a king's robe is more ample; it would require a million to purchase the stuff. At least, Athos, if you are not treasurer, you are on a good footing at court."

"By the faith of a gentleman, I know nothing about it," said Athos, simply.

"What! you know nothing about it?"

"No! I have not seen the king since we left Dover."

"Then he has forgotten you too! *Mordioux!* That is shameful!"

"His Majesty has had so much business to transact."

"Oh!" cried D'Artagnan, with one of those intelligent grimaces which he alone knew how to make, "that is enough to make me recover my love for Monseigneur Giulio Mazarini. What, Athos! the king has not seen you since?"

"No."

"And you are not furious?"

"I! — why should I be? Do you imagine, my dear D'Artagnan, that it was on the king's account I acted as I have done? I did not know the young man. I defended the father, who represented a principle sacred in my eyes, and I allowed myself to be drawn towards the son by a sympathy for this same principle. Besides, he was a worthy knight, a noble mortal creature, that father; do you remember him?"

"Yes, that is true; he was a brave, an excellent man, who led a sad life, but made a fine end."

"Well, my dear D'Artagnan, understand this: to that king, to that man of heart, to that friend of my thoughts, if I durst venture to say so, I swore, at the last hour, to preserve faithfully the secret of a deposit which was to be transmitted to his son, to assist him at his need. This young man came to me; he described his destitution; he was unaware that I was anything to him but a living souvenir of his father. I have accomplished for Charles II. what I promised Charles I.; that is all. Of what consequence is it to me, then, whether he be grateful or not? It is to myself I have rendered a service, by relieving myself of this responsibility, and not to him."

"Well, I have always said," replied D'Artagnan, with

a sigh, "that disinterestedness is the finest thing in the world."

"Well; and you, my friend," resumed Athos, — "are you not in the same situation as myself? If I have properly understood your words, you have allowed yourself to be affected by the misfortunes of this young man; that, on your part, was much greater than it was upon mine, for I had a duty to fulfil, while you were under no obligation to the son of the martyr. You had not, on your part, to pay him the price of that precious drop of blood which he let fall upon my brow, through the floor of his scaffold. That which made you act was heart alone, — the noble and good heart which you possess beneath your apparent scepticism and sarcastic irony; you have devoted the fortune of a servant, and your own, I suspect, my benevolent miser! and your sacrifice is not acknowledged! Of what consequence is it? You wish to repay Planchet his money? I can comprehend that, my friend; for it is not becoming in a gentleman to borrow of his inferior, without returning him principal and interest. Well, I will sell La Fère, if necessary, and if not, some little farm. You shall pay Planchet, and there will be enough, believe me, of corn left in my granaries for us two and Raoul. In this way, my friend, you will owe an obligation to nobody but yourself; and, if I know you well, it will not be a small satisfaction to your mind, to be able to say, 'I have made a king!' Am I right?"

"Athos! Athos!" murmured D'Artagnan, thoughtfully, "I have told you more than once, that the day on which you shall preach, I will attend the sermon; the day on which you shall tell me there is a hell, *mordioux!* I shall be afraid of the gridiron and the forks. You are better than I, or rather, better than anybody; and I only

acknowledge the possession of one merit, and that is, of not being jealous. Except that defect, God damn me, as the English say, if I have not all the rest."

"I know nobody equal to D'Artagnan," replied Athos; "but here we are, arrived in good time at the house I inhabit. Will you come in, my friend?"

"Eh! why, this is the Stag's Horn tavern, I think?" said D'Artagnan.

"I confess I chose it on purpose. I like old acquaintances; I like to sit down on that place whereon I sank, overcome by fatigue, overwhelmed with despair, when you returned on the 31st of January."

"After having discovered the abode of the masked executioner? Yes, that was a terrible day!"

"Come in, then," said Athos, interrupting him.

They entered the large apartment, formerly the common one. The tavern in general, and this room in particular, had undergone great changes; the ancient host of the Musketeers, having become tolerably rich for an innkeeper, had closed his shop, and made of this room a warehouse for colonial provisions. As for the rest of the house, he let it ready furnished to strangers. It was with unspeakable emotion D'Artagnan recognized all the furniture of the chamber of the first story, — the wainscoting, the tapestries, and even that geographical chart which Porthos had so fondly studied in his moments of leisure.

"It is eleven years ago," cried D'Artagnan. "*Mordioux!* it appears to me a century!"

"And to me but a day," said Athos. "Imagine the joy I experience, my friend, in seeing you here, in pressing your hand, in casting from me sword and poniard, and tasting without mistrust this glass of sherry. And, oh! what still further joy it would be, if our two friends were

there, at the two angles of the table, and Raoul, my beloved Raoul, on the threshold, looking at us with his large eyes, at once so brilliant and so soft!"

"Yes, yes," said D'Artagnan, much affected, "that is true. I approve particularly of the first part of your thought; it is very pleasant to smile here where we have with so good reason shuddered at thinking that from one moment to another M. Mordaunt might appear upon the landing."

At this moment the door opened, and D'Artagnan, brave as he was, could not restrain a slight movement of fright. Athos understood him; and smiling, "It is our host," said he, "bringing me a letter."

"Yes, my Lord," said the good man; "here is a letter for your Honor."

"Thank you," said Athos, taking the letter without looking at it. "Tell me, my dear host, if you do not remember this gentleman."

The old man raised his head, and looked attentively at D'Artagnan.

"No," said he.

"It is," said Athos, "one of those friends of whom I have spoken to you, and who lodged here with me eleven years ago."

"Oh! but," said the old man, "so many strangers have lodged here!"

"But we lodged here on the 30th of January, 1649," added Athos, believing he would stimulate the lazy memory of the host by this remark.

"That is very possible," replied he, smiling; "but it is so long ago!" and he bowed, and went out.

"Thank you," said D'Artagnan; "perform exploits, accomplish revolutions, endeavor to engrave your name in stone or upon brass with strong swords! there is

something more rebellious, more hard, more forgetful than iron, brass, or stone, and that is the aging brain of the master of lodgings enriched by his trade. He does not know me! — well, I should have known him."

Athos, still smiling, unsealed his letter. "Ah!" said he, "a letter from Parry."

"Oh! oh!" said D'Artagnan, "read it, my friend, read it! It, no doubt, contains news."

Athos shook his head, and read: —

MONSIEUR THE COUNT, — The king has experienced much regret at not seeing you to-day, near him, at his entrance. His Majesty commands me to say so, and to recall him to your memory. His Majesty will expect you this evening, at the palace of St. James, between nine and ten o'clock.

I am, with respect, Monsieur the Count, your Honor's very humble and very obedient servant, PARRY.

"You see, my dear D'Artagnan," said Athos, "we must not despair of the hearts of kings."

"Not despair! you have reason to say so!" replied D'Artagnan.

"Oh! my dear, very dear friend," resumed Athos, whom the almost imperceptible bitterness of D'Artagnan had not escaped. "Pardon me! can I have unintentionally wounded my best comrade?"

"You are mad, Athos, and to prove it I will conduct you to the palace, — to the very gate, I mean; the walk will do me good."

"You will go in with me, my friend; I will speak to his Majesty."

"No, no!" replied D'Artagnan, with a true pride, free from all mixture; "if there is anything worse than begging yourself, it is making others beg for you. Come, let us go, my friend, the walk will be charming; I will,

in passing, show you the house of M. Monk, who has detained me with him. A beautiful house, by my faith! Being a general in England is better than being a marshal in France, please to know."

Athos allowed himself to be led along, saddened by D'Artagnan's fictitious gayety. The whole city was in a state of joy; the two friends were jostled at every moment by enthusiasts who required them, in their intoxication, to cry out, "Long live good King Charles!" D'Artagnan replied by a grunt, and Athos by a smile. They arrived thus in front of Monk's house, before which, as we have said, they had to pass on their way to St. James. Athos and D'Artagnan said but little on their way, for the simple reason that they would have had so many things to talk about if they had spoken. Athos thought that by speaking he should evince satisfaction, and that that might wound D'Artagnan. The latter feared that in speaking he should allow some little acerbity to steal into his words which would render his company unpleasant to his friend. It was a singular emulation of silence between contentment and ill-humor. D'Artagnan gave way first to that itching at the tip of his tongue which he so habitually experienced.

"Do you remember, Athos," said he, "the passage of the 'Mémoires de D'Aubigny,' in which that devoted servant — a Gascon like myself, poor as myself, and, I was going to add, brave as myself — relates instances of the meanness of Henry IV.? My father always told me, I remember, that D'Aubigny was a liar. But, nevertheless, examine how all the princes, the issue of the great Henry, keep up the character of the race."

"Nonsense!" said Athos, "the kings of France misers! You are mad, my friend."

"Oh! you are so perfect yourself, you never agree to

the faults of others. But, in reality, Henry IV. was covetous; Louis XIII., his son, was so likewise, — we know something of that, don't we? Gaston carried this vice to exaggeration, and has made himself, in this respect, hated by all who surround him. Henriette, poor woman, might well be avaricious, — she who did not eat every day, and could not warm herself every winter; and that is an example she has given to her son Charles II., grandson of the great Henry IV., who is as covetous as his mother and his grandfather. See if I have well traced the genealogy of the misers!"

"D'Artagnan, my friend," cried Athos, "you are very rude towards that eagle race called the Bourbons."

"Eh! and I have forgotten the best instance of all, — the other grandson of the Béarnais, Louis XIV., my ex-master. Well, I hope he is miserly enough, who would not lend a million to his brother Charles! Good! I see you are beginning to be angry. Here we are, by good luck, close to my house, or rather to that of my friend, M. Monk."

"My dear D'Artagnan, you do not make me angry, you make me sad; it is cruel, in fact, to see a man of your merit out of the position his services ought to have acquired; it appears to me, my dear friend, that your name is as radiant as the greatest names in war and diplomacy. Tell me if the Luynes, the Bellegardes, and the Bassompierres have merited, as we have, fortunes and honors? You are right, my friend, a hundred times right."

D'Artagnan sighed, and preceding his friend under the porch of the mansion Monk inhabited, at the extremity of the city, "Permit me," said he, "to leave my purse at home; for if in the crowd those clever pickpockets of London, who are much boasted of even in Paris, were to

steal from me the remainder of my poor crowns, I should not be able to return to France. Now, content I left France, and wild with joy I should return to it, seeing that all my prejudices of former days against England are returned, accompanied by many others."

Athos made no reply.

"So then, my dear friend, one second, and I will follow you," said D'Artagnan. "I know you are in a hurry to go yonder to receive your reward; but, believe me, I am not less eager to partake of your joy, although at a distance. Wait for me;" and D'Artagnan was already passing through the vestibule, when a man, half servant, half soldier, who filled in Monk's establishment the double functions of porter and guard, stopped our musketeer, saying to him, in English, —

"I beg your pardon, my Lord d'Artagnan!"

"Well," replied the latter; "what is it? Is the general going to dismiss me? That only was wanting, — that I should be expelled by him!"

These words, spoken in French, made no impression upon the person to whom they were addressed, and who himself only spoke an English mixed with the rudest Scotch. But Athos was grieved with them, for he began to think D'Artagnan was not wrong.

The Englishman showed D'Artagnan a letter: "From the general," said he.

"Ay! that's it, my dismissal!" replied the Gascon. "Must it be read, Athos?"

"You must be deceived," said Athos, "or I know no other honest people in the world but you and myself."

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders and unsealed the letter, while the impassive Englishman held for him a large lantern, by the light of which he was enabled to read it.

"Well, what have you?" said Athos, seeing the countenance of the reader change.

"Read it yourself," said the musketeer.

Athos took the paper and read: —

M. D'ARTAGNAN, — The king very much regrets you did not come to St. Paul's with his *cortége*. You have failed with him as you failed with me, my dear captain. There is but one means of repairing all this. His Majesty expects me at nine o'clock at the palace of St. James; will you be there at the same time with me? His gracious Majesty appoints that hour for an audience he grants you.

This letter was from Monk.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE AUDIENCE.

"WELL?" cried Athos, with a mild look of reproach, when D'Artagnan had read the letter addressed to him by Monk.

"Well!" said D'Artagnan, red with pleasure, and a little with shame for having so hastily accused the king and Monk, "this is a politeness, — which leads to nothing, it is true, but yet it is a politeness."

"I could hardly believe the young prince ungrateful," said Athos.

"The fact is, that his present is still too near to his past," replied D'Artagnan; "but, after all, everything to the present moment proves me right."

"I acknowledge it, my dear friend, I acknowledge it. Ah! there is your cheerful look returned. You cannot think how delighted I am."

"Thus you see," said D'Artagnan, "Charles II. receives M. Monk at nine o'clock; me he will receive at ten; it is a grand audience, of the sort which at the Louvre are called 'distributions of holy court water.' Come, let us go and place ourselves under the spout, my dear friend! Come along!"

Athos did not reply; and both directed their steps, at a quick pace, towards the palace of St. James, which the crowd still surrounded, to catch through the windows the shadows of the courtiers and the reflection of the royal person. Eight o'clock was striking, when the

two friends took their places in the gallery filled with courtiers and politicians. Every one gave a glance at these simply dressed men in foreign habits, at these two noble heads so full of character and meaning. On their side, Athos and D'Artagnan, having with swift glances taken the measure of the whole of the assembly, resumed their chat. A great noise was suddenly heard at the extremity of the gallery, — it was General Monk, who entered, followed by more than twenty officers, all anxious for one of his smiles; for he had been the evening before master of all England, and a glorious morrow was expected for the restorer of the family of the Stuarts.

"Gentlemen," said Monk, turning round, "henceforward I beg you to remember that I am no longer anything. Lately I commanded the principal army of the republic; now that army is the king's, into whose hands I am about to replace, at his command, my power of yesterday."

Great surprise was expressed on the countenances of all; and the circle of adulators and suppliants which surrounded Monk an instant before, was enlarged by degrees, until it was lost in the large undulations of the crowd. Monk was going into the antechamber, as others did. D'Artagnan could not help remarking this to the Comte de la Fère, who frowned on beholding it. Suddenly the door of Charles's cabinet opened, and the young king appeared, preceded by two officers of his household.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said he. "Is General Monk here?"

"I am here, Sire," replied the old general.

Charles stepped hastily towards him, and seized his hand with the warmest demonstration of friendship. "General," said the king, aloud, "I have just signed your patent, — you are Duke of Albemarle; and my intention

is that no one shall equal you in power and fortune in this kingdom, where — the noble Montrose excepted — no one has equalled you in loyalty, courage, and talent. Gentlemen, the duke is commander of our armies by land and by sea; pay him your respects, if you please, in that character."

While every one was pressing round the general, who received all this homage without losing his impassiveness for an instant, D'Artagnan said to Athos: "When one thinks that this duchy, this command of the land and sea forces, — all these grandeurs, in a word, — have been shut up in a box six feet long and three feet wide! — "

"My friend," replied Athos, "much more imposing grandeurs are confined in boxes still smaller, — and remain there forever."

All at once Monk perceived the two gentlemen, who held themselves apart waiting for the crowd to diminish; he himself made a passage towards them, and surprised them in the midst of their philosophical reflections. "Were you speaking of me?" said he, with a smile.

"My Lord," replied Athos, "we were speaking also of God."

Monk reflected for a moment, and then replied gayly: "Gentlemen, let us speak a little of the king likewise, if you please; for you have, I believe, an audience of his Majesty."

"At nine o'clock," said Athos.

"At ten o'clock," said D'Artagnan.

"Let us go into this closet at once," replied Monk, making a sign to his two companions to precede him; but to this neither would consent.

The king during this conversation had returned to the centre of the gallery.

"Oh, my Frenchmen!" said he, in that tone of care-

less gayety which, in spite of so much grief and so many crosses, he had never lost. "The Frenchmen! my consolation!" Athos and D'Artagnan bowed.

"Duke, conduct these gentlemen into my study. — I am at your service, Messieurs," added he, in French. And he promptly expedited his court, to return to his Frenchmen, as he called them. "M. d'Artagnan," said he, as he entered his cabinet, "I am glad to see you again."

"Sire, my joy is at its height at having the honor to salute your Majesty in your own palace of St. James."

"Monsieur, you have been willing to render me a great service, and I owe you my gratitude for it. If I did not fear to intrude upon the rights of our general commandant, I would offer you some post worthy of you near our person."

"Sire," replied D'Artagnan, "I have quitted the service of the King of France, making my prince a promise not to serve any other king."

"Humph!" said Charles, "I am sorry to hear that. I should like to do much for you; you please me."

"Sire — "

"But let us see," said Charles, with a smile, "if we cannot make you break your word. — Duke, assist me. — If you were offered — that is to say, if I offered you the chief command of my Musketeers?" D'Artagnan bowed lower than before.

"I should have the regret to refuse what your gracious Majesty would offer me," said he. "A gentleman has but his word; and that word, as I have had the honor to tell your Majesty, is engaged to the King of France."

"We will say no more about it, then," said the king, turning towards Athos, and leaving D'Artagnan plunged in the deepest pangs of disappointment.

"Ah! I said so," muttered the musketeer. "Words! words! Court holy water! Kings have always a marvellous talent for offering us that which they know we will not accept, and in appearing generous without risk. Fool! — triple fool that I was to have hoped for a moment!"

During this time Charles had taken the hand of Athos. "Count," said he, "you have been to me a second father; the services you have rendered me are above all price. I have thought of a recompense, notwithstanding. You were created by my father a Knight of the Garter, — that is an order which all the kings of Europe cannot bear; by the queen regent, Knight of the Holy Ghost, — which is an order not less illustrious; I join to it that of the Golden Fleece, which the King of France has sent me, to whom the King of Spain, his father-in-law, gave two on the occasion of his marriage; but, in return, I have a service to ask of you."

"Sire," said Athos, with confusion, "the Golden Fleece for me, when the King of France is the only person in my country who enjoys that distinction!"

"I wish you to be, in your country and elsewhere, the equal of all those whom sovereigns have honored with their favor," said Charles, drawing the chain from his neck; "and I am sure. Count, my father smiles on me from the depths of his tomb."

"It is unaccountably strange," said D'Artagnan to himself, while his friend, on his knees, received the eminent order which the king conferred on him, — "it is almost incredible that I have always seen showers of prosperity fall upon all who surrounded me, and that not a drop ever reached me! If I were a jealous man, it would be enough to make me tear my hair, by my word of honor!"

Athos rose from his knees, and Charles embraced him tenderly. "General!" said he to Monk; then stopping with a smile, "Pardon me, — duke I mean. No wonder if I mistake; the word 'duke' is too short for me, I always seek for some title to elongate it. I should wish to see you so near my throne that I might say to you, as to Louis XIV., 'My brother!' Oh! I have it; and you will be almost my brother, for I make you viceroy of Ireland and Scotland, my dear duke. So, after that fashion, henceforward I shall not make a mistake."

The duke seized the hand of the king, but without enthusiasm, without joy, as he did everything. His heart, however, had been moved by this last favor. Charles, by skilfully husbanding his generosity, had left the duke time to wish, although he might not have wished for so much as was given him.

"*Mordioux!*" grumbled D'Artagnan, "there is the shower beginning again! Oh, it is enough to turn one's brain!" and he turned away with an air so sorrowful and so comically piteous, that the king could not restrain a smile. Monk was preparing to leave the cabinet to take leave of Charles.

"What! my trusty and well-beloved," said the king to the duke, "are you going?"

"If it please your Majesty, for in truth I am tired. The emotions of the day have worn me out; I need repose."

"But," said the king, "you are not going without M. d'Artagnan, I hope."

"Why not, Sire?" said the old warrior.

"Well! you know very well why," said the king.

Monk looked at Charles with astonishment.

"I beg your Majesty's pardon. I do not know — what you mean."

"Oh! possibly not; but if *you* forget, M. d'Artagnan does not."

Astonishment was painted on the face of the musketeer.

"Well, then, Duke," said the king, "do you not lodge with M. d'Artagnan?"

"I have the honor to offer M. d'Artagnan a lodging; yes, Sire."

"That idea is your own, and yours solely?"

"Mine and mine only; yes, Sire."

"Well! but it could not be otherwise, — the prisoner is always at the home of his conqueror."

Monk colored in his turn. "Ah! that is true," said he; "I am M. d'Artagnan's prisoner."

"Without doubt, Monk, since you are not yet ransomed; but do not let that concern you. It was I who took you out of M. d'Artagnan's hands, and it is I who will pay your ransom."

The eyes of D'Artagnan regained their gayety and their brilliancy. The Gascon began to comprehend. Charles advanced towards him.

"The general," said he, "is not rich, and cannot pay you what he is worth. I am richer, certainly; but now that he is a duke, and if not a king, almost a king, he is worth a sum I could not perhaps pay. Come, M. d'Artagnan, be moderate with me; how much do I owe you?"

D'Artagnan, delighted at the turn things were taking, but not for a moment losing his self-possession, replied: "Sire, your Majesty has no occasion to be alarmed. When I had the good fortune to take his Grace, M. Monk was only a general; it is therefore only a general's ransom that is due to me. But if the general will have the kindness to deliver me his sword, I shall consider myself paid; for there is nothing in the world but the general's sword which is worth so much as himself."

"Odds fish! as my father said," cried Charles. "That is a gallant proposal, and a gallant man, is he not, Duke?"

"Upon my honor, yes, Sire;" and he drew his sword. "Monsieur," said he to D'Artagnan, "here is what you demand. Many may have handled a better blade; but however modest mine may be, I have never surrendered it to any one."

D'Artagnan received with pride the sword which had just made a king.

"Oh! oh!" cried Charles II.; "what! a sword that has restored me to my throne to go out of the kingdom, and not, one day, to figure among the ornaments of my crown! No, on my soul! that shall not be. Captain d'Artagnan, I will give you two hundred thousand livres for your sword; if that is too little, say so."

"It is too little, Sire," replied D'Artagnan, with inimitable seriousness. "In the first place, I do not at all wish to sell it; but your Majesty desires me to do so, and that is an order. I obey, then; but the respect I owe to the illustrious warrior who hears me, commands me to estimate at a half more the reward of my victory. I ask, then, three hundred thousand livres for the sword, or I will give it to your Majesty for nothing;" and taking it by the point he presented it to the king. Charles broke into hilarious laughter.

"A gallant man, and a joyous companion! Odds fish! is he not, Duke? is he not, Count? He pleases me! I like him! Here, Chevalier d'Artagnan, take this;" and going to the table, he took a pen and wrote an order upon his treasurer for three hundred thousand livres.

D'Artagnan took it, and turning gravely towards Monk, "I have still asked too little, I know," said he; "but believe me, Monsieur the Duke, I would rather have died than allow myself to be governed by avarice."

The king began to laugh again, like the happiest cockney of his kingdom.

"You will come and see me again before you go, Chevalier?" said he; "I shall want to lay in a stock of gayety, now my Frenchmen are leaving me."

"Ah, Sire, it shall not be with the gayety as with the duke's sword; I will give it to your Majesty gratis," replied D'Artagnan, whose feet scarcely seemed to touch the ground.

"And you, Count," added Charles, turning towards Athos, "come again, also; I have an important message to confide to you. Your hand, Duke." Monk pressed the hand of the king.

"Adieu, gentlemen!" said Charles, holding out each of his hands to the two Frenchmen, who carried them to their lips.

"Well," said Athos, when they were out of the palace, "are you satisfied?"

"Hush!" said D'Artagnan, wild with joy, "I am not yet returned from the treasurer's; the spout may fall upon my head."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OF THE EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES.

D'ARTAGNAN lost no time; and as soon as the thing was suitable and opportune, he paid a visit to the lord-treasurer of his Majesty. He had then the satisfaction of exchanging a piece of paper covered with very ugly writing for a prodigious number of crowns, recently stamped with the image of his very gracious Majesty Charles II. D'Artagnan easily recovered his self possession; and yet upon this occasion he could not help evincing a joy which the reader will perhaps comprehend, if he deigns to have some indulgence for a man who, since his birth, had never seen so many pieces and roulcaux of pieces placed together in an order truly agreeable to the eye. The treasurer placed all these rouleaux in bags, and closed each bag with a stamp of the arms of England, — a favor which treasurers do not accord to everybody. Then, impassive, and with all the politeness that should be shown to a man honored with the friendship of the king, he said to D'Artagnan, —

"Take away your money, sir."

Your money! These words made a thousand chords vibrate in the heart of D'Artagnan, which he had never felt before. He had the bags packed in a small cart, and returned home meditating profoundly. A man who possesses three hundred thousand livres can no longer expect to wear a smooth brow; a wrinkle for every hundred thousand livres is not too much. D'Artagnan shut him-

self up, ate no dinner, closed his door against everybody, and with a lighted lamp and a loaded pistol on the table, watched all night, ruminating upon the means of preventing these lovely crowns, which from the coffers of the king had passed into his coffers, from passing from his coffers into the pockets of any thief whatever. The best means discovered by the Gascon was to enclose his treasure, for the present, under locks so solid that no wrist could break them, and so complicated that no common key could open them. D'Artagnan remembered that the English have great skill in mechanics and conservative industry; and he determined to go in the morning in search of a mechanic who would sell him a strong box. He did not go far. Master Will Jobson, dwelling in Piccadilly, listened to his propositions, comprehended his dilemma, and promised to make him a safety-lock that should relieve him from all future fear.

"I will give you," said he, "a piece of mechanism entirely new. At the first serious attempt upon your lock, an invisible plate will open of itself and a small cannon, equally invisible, will vomit forth a pretty copper bullet of eight-ounce weight, which will knock down the intruder, and not without a loud report. What do you think of it?"

"I think it very ingenious," cried D'Artagnan; "the little copper bullet pleases me mightily. So now, Monsieur the mechanic, the terms?"

"A fortnight for the execution, and fifteen thousand livres, payable on delivery," replied the artisan.

D'Artagnan's brow darkened. A fortnight was delay enough to allow the thieves of London time to remove all occasion for the strong box. As to the fifteen thousand livres, that would be paying too dear for what a little vigilance would procure him for nothing.

"I will think of it," said he; "thank you, Monsieur." And he returned home at full speed; nobody had yet touched his treasure.

That same day, Athos paid his friend a visit, and found him so thoughtful that he could not help expressing his surprise.

"How is this?" said he, "you are rich and not gay, — you, who were so anxious for wealth!"

"My friend, the pleasures to which we are not accustomed oppress us more than the griefs with which we are familiar. Give me your opinion, if you please. I can ask you, who have always had money: when we have money, what do we do with it?"

"That depends."

"What have you done with yours, seeing that it has not made you a miser or a prodigal? For avarice dries up the heart, and prodigality drowns it, — is not that so?"

"Fabricius could not have spoken more justly. But, in truth, my money has never been a burden to me."

"How so? Do you place it out at interest?"

"No; you know I have a tolerably handsome house, and that house composes the better part of my property."

"I know it does."

"So that you can be as rich as I am, and indeed richer, whenever you like, by the same means."

"But your rents, — do you lay them by?"

"No."

"What do you think of a chest concealed in a wall?"

"I never made use of such a thing."

"Then you must have some confidant, some safe man of business, who pays you interest at a fair rate."

"Not at all."

"Good heavens! what do you do with it, then?"

"I spend all I have, and I have only what I spend, my dear D'Artagnan."

"Ah! that may be. But you are something of a prince; fifteen or sixteen thousand livres melt away between your fingers; and then you have expenses and appearances —"

"Well; I don't see why you should be less of a noble than I am, my friend; your money would be quite sufficient."

"Three hundred thousand livres! Two thirds too much!"

"I beg your pardon — did you not tell me? — I thought I heard you say — I fancied you had a partner —"

"Ah! *mordioux!* that 's true," cried D'Artagnan, coloring; "there is Planchet. I had forgotten Planchet, upon my life! Well, there are my hundred thousand crowns broken into! That 's a pity; it was a round sum, and sounded well. — That is true, Athos; I am no longer rich. What a memory you have!"

"Tolerably good; yes, thank God!"

"That brave Planchet!" grumbled D'Artagnan; "he has not had a bad dream! What a speculation! *Peste!* Well, what is said is said!"

"How much are you to give him?"

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "he is not a bad fellow; I shall arrange matters with him. I have had a great deal of trouble, you see, and expenses; all that must be taken into account."

"My dear friend, I can depend upon you, and have no fear for the worthy Planchet; his interests are better in your hands than in his own. But now that you have nothing more to do here, we will set out, if you please. You can go and thank his Majesty, ask if he has any commands, and in six days we may be able to get sight of the towers of Notre-Dame."

"My friend, I am most anxious to be off, and will go at once and pay my respects to the king."

"I," said Athos, "am going to call upon some friends in the city, and shall be then at your service."

"Will you lend me Grimaud?"

"With all my heart. What do you want to do with him?"

"Something very simple, and which will not fatigue him; I will only beg him to take charge of my pistols, which lie there on the table near that coffer."

"Very well!" replied Athos, imperturbably.

"And he will not stir, will he?"

"Not more than the pistols themselves."

"Then I will go and take leave of his Majesty. *Au revoir!*"

D'Artagnan arrived at St. James's, where Charles II., who was busy writing, kept him in the antechamber a full hour. While walking about in the gallery, from the door to the window, from the window to the door, he thought he saw a cloak like Athos's cross the vestibule; but at the moment he was going to ascertain if it were he, the usher summoned him to his Majesty's presence. Charles II. rubbed his hands at receiving the thanks of our friend.

"Chevalier," said he, "you are wrong in expressing gratitude to me; I have not paid you a quarter of the value of the history of the box into which you put the brave general — the excellent Duke of Albemarle, I mean;" and the king laughed heartily.

D'Artagnan did not think it proper to interrupt his Majesty, and bowed with much modesty.

"*A propos*," continued Charles, "do you think my dear Monk has really pardoned you?"

"Pardoned me! yes, I hope so, Sire!"

"Eh! but it was a cruel trick! Odds fish! to pack up

the first personage of the English Revolution like a herring! In your place, I would not trust him, Chevalier."

"But, Sire —"

"Yes, I know very well that Monk calls you his friend. But he has too penetrating an eye not to have a memory, and too lofty a brow not to be very proud, you know, — *grande supercilium.*"

"I certainly will learn Latin," said D'Artagnan to himself.

"But stop," cried the merry monarch, "I must manage your reconciliation; I know how to set about it; so —"

D'Artagnan bit his mustache. "Will your Majesty permit me to tell you the truth?"

"Speak, Chevalier, speak."

"Well, Sire, you alarm me greatly. If your Majesty undertakes the affair, as you seem inclined to do, I am a lost man; the duke will have me assassinated."

The king burst into a fresh roar of laughter, which changed D'Artagnan's alarm into downright terror.

"Sire, I beg you to allow me to settle this matter myself; and if your Majesty has no further need of my services —"

"No, Chevalier. What! do you want to leave us?" replied Charles, with an hilarity that grew more and more alarming.

"If your Majesty has no more commands for me."

Charles became more serious.

"One single thing. See my sister, Lady Henrietta. Do you know her?"

"No, Sire, but — an old soldier like me is not an agreeable spectacle for a young and gay princess."

"Ay! but my sister must know you; she must, at her need, have you to depend upon."

"Sire, every one that is dear to your Majesty will be sacred to me."

"Very well! — Parry! Come here, Parry."

The lateral door opened; and Parry entered, his face beaming with pleasure as soon as he saw D'Artagnan.

"What is Rochester doing?" said the king.

"He is upon the canal with the ladies," replied Parry.

"And Buckingham?"

"He is there also."

"That is well. You will conduct the chevalier to Villiers, — that is, the Duke of Buckingham, Chevalier, — and beg the duke to introduce M. d'Artagnan to the Princess Henrietta."

Parry bowed and smiled to D'Artagnan.

"Chevalier," continued the king, "this is your parting audience; you can afterwards set out as soon as you please."

"Sire, I thank you."

"But be sure you make your peace with Monk!"

"Oh, Sire — "

"You know there is one of my vessels at your disposal?"

"Sire, you overpower me; I cannot think of putting your Majesty's officers to inconvenience on my account."

The king slapped D'Artagnan upon the shoulder. "Nobody will be inconvenienced on your account, Chevalier, but for that of an ambassador I am about sending to France, and to whom you will serve willingly as a companion, I fancy, for you know him."

D'Artagnan appeared astonished.

"He is a certain Comte de la Fère, — he you call Athos," added the king; terminating the conversation, as he had begun it, by a joyous burst of laughter. "Adieu, Chevalier, adieu. Love me as I love you." And thereupon, making a sign to Parry to ask if there were any

one waiting for him in the adjoining cabinet, the king disappeared into that cabinet, leaving the place to the chevalier, much astonished with this singular audience. The old man took his arm in a friendly way, and led him towards the garden.

CHAPTER XXXV.

UPON THE CANAL.

Upon the canal of waters of an opaque green, bordered with marble, upon which time had already scattered black spots and tufts of mossy grass, there glided majestically a long flat boat, ornamented with the arms of England, surmounted by a dais, and carpeted with long damasked stuffs, which trailed their fringes in the water. Eight rowers, leaning lazily to their oars, made it move upon the canal with the graceful slowness of the swans, which, disturbed in their ancient possessions by the approach of the boat, looked from a distance at this splendid and noisy pageant. We say noisy, — for the boat contained four players upon the guitar and the lute, two singers, and several courtiers, all sparkling with gold and precious stones, and showing their white teeth in emulation of each other, to please Lady Henrietta Stuart, granddaughter of Henry IV., daughter of Charles I., and sister of Charles II., who occupied the seat of honor under the daïs of the boat. We know this young princess; we have seen her at the Louvre with her mother, wanting wood, wanting bread, and fed by the assistant-bishop and the Parliament. She had, therefore, like her brothers, passed through a troublous youth; then, all at once, she had just awakened from a long and horrible dream, seated on the steps of a throne, surrounded by courtiers and flatterers. Like Mary Stuart on leaving prison, she aspired not only to life and liberty, but to power and wealth.

Lady Henrietta, in growing, had attained remarkable beauty, which the recent restoration had rendered celebrated. Misfortune had taken from her the lustre of pride, but prosperity had restored it to her. She was resplendent, then, in her joy and her happiness, — like those hot-house flowers which, forgotten during a night of the first frosts of autumn, have hung their heads, but which on the morrow, warmed once more by the atmosphere in which they were born, rise again with greater splendor than ever. Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, son of him who played so conspicuous a part in the early chapters of this history, — Villiers of Buckingham, a handsome cavalier, melancholy with women, a jester with men, — and Wilmot, Lord Rochester, a jester with both sexes, were standing at this moment before Lady Henrietta, disputing the privilege of making her smile. As to that young and beautiful princess, reclining upon a cushion of velvet bordered with gold, her hands hanging listlessly so as to dip in the water, she listened carelessly to the musicians without hearing them, and heard the two courtiers without appearing to listen to them. This Lady Henrietta, this charming creature, this woman who joined the graces of France to those of England, not having yet loved, was cruel in her coquetry. No smile — that innocent favor of young girls — brightened her countenance; and if at times she raised her eyes, it was to fasten them upon one or other of the cavaliers with such a fixity that their gallantry, bold as it was through experience, took the alarm, and became timid.

In the mean while the boat continued its course, the musicians made a great noise, and the courtiers began, like them, to be out of breath. Besides, the excursion became doubtless monotonous to the princess; for, all at

once, shaking her head with an air of impatience, "Come, gentlemen, enough of this; let us land."

"Ah, Madam," said Buckingham, "we are very unfortunate! We have not succeeded in making the excursion agreeable to your Highness."

"My mother expects me," replied the princess; "and I must frankly admit, gentlemen, I am *ennuyée;*" and while uttering this cruel word, Henrietta endeavored to console by a look each of the young men, who appeared terrified at such frankness. The look produced its effect, the two faces brightened; but immediately, as if the royal coquette thought she had done too much for simple mortals, she made a movement, turned her back to both her adorers, and appeared plunged in a reverie in which it was evident they had no part.

Buckingham bit his lips with anger; for he was truly in love with Lady Henrietta, and in that capacity took everything in a serious light. Rochester bit his lips likewise; but as his wit always dominated over his heart, it was purely and simply to repress a malicious burst of laughter. The princess was then allowing the eyes she turned from the young nobles to wander over the green and flowery turf of the park, when she perceived Parry and D'Artagnan at a distance.

"Who is coming yonder?" said she.

The two young men turned round with the rapidity of lightning.

"Parry," replied Buckingham; "nobody but Parry."

"I beg your pardon," said Rochester, "but I think he has a companion."

"Yes," said the princess, at first with languor, but then — "What mean those words, 'Nobody but Parry;' say, my Lord?"

"Because, Madam," replied Buckingham, piqued, "be-

cause the faithful Parry, the wandering Parry, the eternal Parry, is not, I believe, of much consequence."

"You are mistaken, Duke. Parry — the wandering Parry, as you call him — has always wandered for the service of my family, and the sight of that old man always gives me satisfaction."

Lady Henrietta followed the usual course of pretty women, particularly coquettish women; she passed from caprice to contradiction. The gallant had undergone the caprice, the courtier must bend beneath the contradictory humor. Buckingham bowed, but made no reply.

"It is true, Madam," said Rochester, bowing in his turn, "that Parry is the model of servants; but, Madam, he is no longer young, and we only laugh at seeing cheerful objects. Is an old man a gay object?"

"Enough, my Lord," said the princess, coolly; "the subject of conversation is unpleasant to me."

Then, as if speaking to herself, "It is really unaccountable," said she, "how little regard my brother's friends have for his servants."

"Ah, Madam," cried Buckingham, "your Grace pierces my heart with a poniard forged by your own hands."

"What is the meaning of that speech, which is turned so like a French madrigal, Duke? I do not understand it."

"It means, Madam, that you yourself, so good, so charming, so sensible, you have laughed sometimes — smiled, I should say — at the idle prattle of that good Parry, for whom your Highness to-day entertains such a marvellous susceptibility."

"Well, my Lord, if I have forgotten myself so far," said Henrietta, "you do wrong to remind me of it;" and she made a sign of impatience. "The good Parry wants

to speak to me, I believe; please to order them to row to the shore, my Lord Rochester."

Rochester hastened to repeat the princess's command; and, a moment after, the boat touched the bank.

"Let us land, gentlemen," said Henrietta, taking the arm which Rochester offered to her, although Buckingham was nearer to her, and had presented his. Then Rochester, with an ill-dissembled pride, which pierced the heart of the unhappy Buckingham through and through, led the princess across the little bridge which the rowers had cast from the royal boat to the shore.

"Which way will your Highness go?" asked Rochester.

"You see, my Lord; towards that good Parry, who is wandering, as my Lord Buckingham says, and seeking me with eyes weakened by the tears he has shed over our misfortunes."

"Good heavens!" said Rochester, "how sad your Highness is to-day! We have, in truth, the air of appearing ridiculous fools to you, Madam."

"Speak for yourself, my Lord," interrupted Buckingham, with vexation; "for my part, I displease her Highness to such a degree that I appear absolutely nothing to her."

Neither Rochester nor the princess made any reply; Henrietta only urged her cavalier to a quicker pace. Buckingham remained behind, and took advantage of this isolation to give himself up to such rage in his handkerchief, that the cambric was bitten in holes.

"Parry, my good Parry," said the princess, with her gentle voice, "come hither. I see you are seeking for me, and I am waiting for you."

"Ah, Madam," said Rochester, coming charitably to the succor of his companion, remaining, as we have said, behind, "if Parry cannot see your royal Highness, the

man who follows him is a sufficient guide, even for a blind man; for he has eyes of flame. That man is a double-lamped lantern."

"Lighting a very handsome martial countenance," said the princess, determined to be as ill-natured as possible. Rochester bowed. "One of those vigorous soldiers' heads seen nowhere but in France," added the princess, with the perseverance of a woman sure of impunity.

Rochester and Buckingham looked at each other, as much as to say, "What can be the matter with her?"

"See, my Lord Buckingham, what Parry wants," said Henrietta; "go!"

The young man, who considered this order as a favor, resumed his courage, and hastened to meet Parry, who, followed by D'Artagnan, advanced slowly on account of his age. D'Artagnan walked slowly but nobly, as D'Artagnan doubled by the third of a million ought to walk, — that is to say, without conceit or swagger, but without timidity. When Buckingham, who had been very eager to comply with the desire of the princess, had stopped at a marble bench, as if fatigued with the few steps he had gone, — when Buckingham, we say, was at a distance of only a few paces from Parry, the latter recognized him.

"Ah, my Lord," cried he, quite out of breath, "will your Grace obey the king?"

"In what, M. Parry?" said the young man, with a coolness tempered by a desire of making himself agreeable to the princess.

"Well, his Majesty begs your Grace to present this gentleman to Lady Henrietta Stuart."

"In the first place, what is the gentleman's name?" said the duke, haughtily.

D'Artagnan, as we know, was easily affronted; the tone of the Duke of Buckingham displeased him. He

surveyed the courtier from head to foot, and two flashes beamed from beneath his bent brows. But, after a struggle, "M. le Chevalier d'Artagnan, my Lord," replied he, quietly.

"Pardon me, Monsieur, that informs me as to your name, but nothing more."

"That is to say?"

"That is to say, I do not know you."

"I am more fortunate than you, Monsieur," replied D'Artagnan; "for I have had the honor of knowing much of your family, and particularly my Lord Duke of Buckingham your illustrious father."

"My father?" said Buckingham. "Well, I think I now remember. M. le Chevalier d'Artagnan, do you say?"

D'Artagnan bowed. "In person," said he.

"Pardon me; but are you one of those Frenchmen who had secret relations with my father?"

"Exactly, Monsieur the Duke. I am one of those Frenchmen."

"Then, Monsieur, permit me to say that it was strange my father never heard of you during his lifetime."

"No, Monsieur, but he heard of me at the moment of his death: it was I who sent to him, by the hands of a servant of Anne of Austria, notice of the dangers which threatened him; unfortunately, it came too late."

"Never mind, Monsieur," said Buckingham. "I understand now, that, having had the intention of rendering a service to the father, you are come to claim the protection of the son."

"In the first place, my Lord," replied D'Artagnan, phlegmatically, "I claim the protection of no man. His Majesty Charles II., to whom I have had the honor of rendering some services, — I may tell you, my Lord, my

life has been passed in such occupations, — King Charles II., then, who wishes to honor me with some kindness, has desired I shall be presented to Lady Henrietta, his sister, to whom I shall, perhaps, have the good fortune to be of service hereafter. Now, the king knew that you at this moment were with her royal Highness, and has sent me to you by the intermission of Parry. There is no other mystery. I ask absolutely nothing of you; and if you will not present me to her royal Highness, I shall have the pain of doing without you, and the courage to present myself."

"At least, Monsieur," said Buckingham, determined to have the last word, "you will not go back from an explanation provoked by yourself."

"I never go back, Monsieur," said D'Artagnan.

"As you have had relations with my father, you must be acquainted with some private details?"

"These relations are already far removed from us, my Lord, for you were not then born; and as to some unfortunate diamond studs, which I received from his hands and carried back to France, it is really not worth while awakening so many remembrances."

"Ah, Monsieur," said Buckingham, warmly, going up to D'Artagnan, and holding out his hand to him, "it is you, then, — you whom my father sought for so earnestly, and who had a right to expect so much from us."

"To expect, Monsieur; in truth, that is my strong point: all my life I have expected."

At this moment the princess, who was tired of not seeing the stranger approach her, arose and came towards them.

"At least, Monsieur," said Buckingham, "you shall not wait for the presentation you claim of me." Then turning towards the princess, and bowing, "Madam," said

the young man, "the king your brother desires me to have the honor of presenting to your Highness M. le Chevalier d'Artagnan."

"In order that your Highness may have, at your need, a firm support and a sure friend," added Parry.

D'Artagnan bowed.

"You have still something to say, Parry," replied Henrietta, smiling upon D'Artagnan, while addressing the old servant.

"Yes, Madam; the king desires you to preserve religiously in your memory the name, and to remember the merit, of M. d'Artagnan, to whom his Majesty owes, he says, the recovery of his kingdom."

Buckingham, the princess, and Rochester looked at one another in astonishment.

"That," said D'Artagnan to Buckingham, "is another little secret, of which, in all probability, I shall not boast to his Majesty's son, as I have done to you with respect to the diamond studs."

"Madam," said Buckingham, "Monsieur has just recalled to my memory, for the second time, an event which excites my curiosity to such a degree that I will venture to ask your permission to take him aside for a moment, to converse in private."

"Do, my Lord," said the princess; "but restore to the sister as quickly as possible this friend so devoted to the brother;" and she took the arm of Rochester, while Buckingham took that of D'Artagnan.

"Oh, tell me, Chevalier," said Buckingham, "all that affair of the diamonds, which nobody knows in England, not even the son of him who was the hero of it."

"My Lord, one person alone had a right to relate all that affair, as you call it, and that was your father; he thought proper to be silent; I must beg you to allow me

to be so likewise;" and D'Artagnan bowed like a man upon whom it was evident no entreaties could prevail.

"Since it is so, Monsieur," said Buckingham, "pardon my indiscretion, I beg you; and if at any time I should go into France — " and he turned round to take a last look at the princess, who took but little notice of him, totally occupied as she was, or appeared to be, with Rochester. Buckingham sighed.

"Well?" said D'Artagnan.

"I was saying that if, any day, I were to go into France — "

"You will go, my Lord," said D'Artagnan; "I will answer for that."

"And how so?"

"Oh, I have strange powers of prediction; if I do predict anything, I am seldom mistaken. If, then, you do come to France?"

"Well, then, Monsieur, I will venture to beg of you, of whom kings ask that valuable friendship which restores crowns to them, a little of that great interest you avowed for my father."

"My Lord," replied D'Artagnan, "believe me, I shall deem myself highly honored if, in France, you remember having seen me here. And now permit — "

Then, turning towards the princess, "Madame," said he, "your Highness is a daughter of France; and in that quality I hope to see you again in Paris. One of my happy days will be that on which your Highness shall give me any command whatever, which will assure me that you have not forgotten the recommendations of your august brother;" and he bowed respectfully to the young princess, who gave him her hand to kiss with a grace wholly royal.

"Ah, Madam," said Buckingham, in a subdued voice, "what can a man do to obtain a similar favor from your Highness?"

"My Lord," replied Henrietta, "ask M. d'Artagnan; he will tell you."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN DREW, AS A FAIRY MIGHT HAVE DONE, A COUNTRY-SEAT FROM A DEAL BOX.

THE king's words regarding the wounded pride of Monk had inspired D'Artagnan with no little apprehension. The lieutenant had had, all his life, the great art of choosing his enemies; and when he had found them implacable and invincible, it was when he had not been able, under any pretence, to make them otherwise. But points of view change greatly in the course of a life. It is a magic lantern, of which the eye of man every year changes the aspects. It results that from the last day of a year on which we saw white, to the first day of the year on which we shall see black, there is but the interval of a single night.

Now D'Artagnan, when he left Calais with his ten scamps, would have hesitated as little in attacking a Goliath, a Nebuchadnezzar, or a Holofernes, as he would in crossing swords with a recruit or cavilling with a landlady. Then he resembled the sparrow-hawk, which, fasting, attacks a ram. Hunger blinds; but D'Artagnan satisfied, D'Artagnan rich, D'Artagnan a conqueror, D'Artagnan proud of so difficult a triumph, — D'Artagnan had too much to lose not to reckon, figure by figure, with probable bad fortune. His thoughts were employed, therefore, all the way on the road from his presentation, with one thing; and that was, how he should manage a man like Monk, — a man whom Charles himself,

king as he was, managed with difficulty; for, scarcely established, the protected might again stand in need of the protector, and would consequently not refuse him, such being the case, the petty satisfaction of transporting M. d'Artagnan, or confining him in one of the Middlesex prisons, or drowning him on his passage from Dover to Boulogne. Such sorts of satisfaction kings are accustomed to render to viceroys without disagreeable consequences. It would not be at all necessary for the king to be active in that counterpart of the piece in which Monk should take his revenge. The part of the king would be confined simply to pardoning the viceroy of Ireland all he should undertake against D'Artagnan. Nothing more was necessary to place the conscience of the Duke of Albemarle at rest than a *te absolvo* said with a laugh, or the scrawl of "Charles the King" traced at the foot of a parchment; and with these two words pronounced, and these three words written, poor D'Artagnan was forever crushed under the ruins of his imagination. And then — a thing sufficiently disquieting for a man with such foresight as our musketeer — he found himself alone; and even the friendship of Athos could not restore his confidence. Certainly, if the affair had concerned only a free distribution of sword-thrusts, the musketeer would have reckoned upon his companion; but in delicate matters with a king, when the *perhaps* of an unlucky chance should arise in justification of Monk or of Charles of England, D'Artagnan knew Athos well enough to be sure he would give the best possible coloring to the loyalty of the survivor, and would content himself with shedding floods of tears on the tomb of the dead, supposing the dead to be his friend, and afterwards composing his epitaph in the most pompous superlatives.

"Decidedly," thought the Gascon, — and this thought

was the result of the reflections which he had just whispered to himself, and which we have repeated aloud, — "decidedly, I must be reconciled with M. Monk, and acquire a proof of his perfect indifference for the past. If, which God forbid, he is still sulky and reserved in the expression of this sentiment, I will give my money to Athos to take away with him, and will remain in England just long enough to unmask him. Then, as I have a quick eye and a light foot, I will seize the first hostile sign; I will decamp, or conceal myself at the residence of my Lord Buckingham, who seems a good sort of devil at bottom, and to whom, in return for his hospitality, I will then relate all that history of the diamonds, which can now compromise nobody but an old queen, who need not be ashamed, after being the wife of a poor creature like Mazarin, of having formerly been the mistress of a handsome nobleman like Buckingham. *Mordioux!* that is the thing, and this Monk shall not get the better of me. Eh! and besides, I have an idea!"

We know that, in general, D'Artagnan was not wanting in ideas; and during his monologue he had buttoned his vest up to the chin, and nothing excited his imagination like this preparation for a combat of any kind, called *accinction* by the Romans. He was quite heated when he reached the mansion of the Duke of Albemarle. He was introduced to the viceroy with a promptitude which proved that he was considered as one of the household. Monk was in his library.

"My Lord," said D'Artagnan, with that expression of frankness which the Gascon knew so well how to assume, — "my Lord, I have come to ask your Grace's advice."

Monk, as closely buttoned up morally, as his antagonist was physically, replied: "Ask, my friend;" and his

countenance presented an expression not less open than that of D'Artagnan.

"My Lord, in the first place, promise me secrecy and indulgence."

"I promise you all you wish. What is the matter? Speak!"

"It is, my Lord, that I am not quite pleased with the king."

"Indeed! And on what account, my dear lieutenant?"

"Because his Majesty gives way sometimes to pleasantries very compromising to his servants; and pleasantry, my Lord, is a weapon that seriously wounds men of the sword like us."

Monk did all in his power not to betray his thought, but D'Artagnan watched him with too close an attention not to detect an almost imperceptible redness upon his face. "Well, now, for my part," said he, with the most natural air possible, "I am not an enemy to pleasantry, my dear M. d'Artagnan; my soldiers will tell you, even, that many times in camp I listened, very indifferently and with a certain pleasure, to the satirical songs which the army of Lambert passed into mine, and which certainly would have made the ears of a general more susceptible than I am, tingle."

"Oh, my Lord," said D'Artagnan, "I know you are a complete man; I know you have been, for a long time, placed above human miseries; but there are pleasantries and pleasantries, and there are those of a certain kind, which, as to myself, have the power of irritating me beyond expression."

"May I inquire what kind, my friend?"

"Such as are directed against my friends, or against people I respect, my Lord."

Monk made a slight movement, but this D'Artagnan

perceived. "And how," asked Monk, "can the stroke of a pin which scratches another tickle your skin? Answer me that."

"My Lord, I can explain it to you in one single sentence; it concerns you."

Monk advanced a single step towards D'Artagnan. "Concerns me?" said he.

"Yes, and this is what I cannot explain; but that arises, perhaps, from my want of knowledge of his character. How can the king have the heart to joke about a man who has rendered him so many and such great services? How can one understand that he should amuse himself in setting by the ears a lion like you with a gnat like me?"

"I do not see it so at all," said Monk.

"But so it is. The king, who owed me a reward, might have rewarded me as a soldier, without contriving that history of the ransom, which affects you, my Lord."

"No," said Monk, laughing, "it does not affect me in any way, I can assure you."

"Not as regards me, I can understand; you know me, my Lord, — I am so discreet that the grave would appear a babbler compared to me; but — do you understand, my Lord?"

"No," replied Monk, with persistent obstinacy.

"If another knew the secret which I know — "

"What secret?"

"Eh! my Lord, — why, that unfortunate secret of Newcastle."

"Oh! the million of M. le Comte de la Fère?"

"No, my Lord, no; the enterprise made upon your Grace's person."

"It was well played, Chevalier; that is all, and no more is to be said about it. You are a soldier, both brave and

cunning, which proves that you unite the qualities of Fabius and Hannibal. You employed your means, force and cunning; there is nothing to be said against that. I ought to have been more guarded."

"Ah, yes, I know, my Lord, and I expected nothing less from your partiality; so that if it were only the abduction in itself, *mordioux!* that would be nothing; but there are —"

"What?"

"The circumstances of that abduction."

"What circumstances?"

"Oh, you know very well what I mean, my Lord."

"No; curse me, if I do."

"There is — in truth it is difficult to speak it."

"There is —?"

"Well, there is that devil of a box!"

Monk colored visibly. "Well, I have forgotten it."

"Deal box," continued D'Artagnan, "with holes for the nose and mouth. In truth, my Lord, all the rest was well; but the box, the box! — decidedly that was a coarse joke." Monk fidgeted about in his chair. "And nevertheless, since I have done that," resumed D'Artagnan, — "I, a soldier of fortune, — the matter is quite simple, because, by the side of that action (a little inconsiderate, I admit) which I committed, but which the gravity of the case may excuse, I possess circumspection and reserve."

"Oh," said Monk, "believe me, I know you well, M. d'Artagnan, and I appreciate you."

D'Artagnan never took his eyes off Monk; studying all which passed in the mind of the general while he was speaking. "But there is no question about me," he resumed.

"Well, then, who is in question?" said Monk, who began to grow a little impatient.

"The king, who will never restrain his tongue."

"Well, and suppose he should say all he knows?" said Monk, with a degree of hesitation.

"My Lord," replied D'Artagnan, "do not dissemble, I implore you, with a man who speaks so frankly as I do. You have a right to feel your susceptibility excited, however magnanimous you may be. What the devil! it is not the place for a man of dignity like you, a man who plays with crowns and sceptres as a Bohemian plays with his balls, — it is not the place for a serious man, I said, to be shut up in a box like a curious object of natural history; for you must understand it would make all your enemies ready to burst with laughter, — and you are so great, so noble, so generous, that you must have many enemies. This secret is enough to set half the human race laughing, if you should be pictured in that box. It is not decent to have the second personage in the kingdom laughed at."

Monk was quite out of countenance at the idea of seeing pictures of himself in his box. Ridicule, as D'Artagnan had shrewdly foreseen, had an effect upon him which neither the chances of war, the aspirations of ambition, nor the fear of death could have.

"Good!" thought the Gascon, "he is frightened: I am safe."

"Oh, as to the king," said Monk, "fear nothing, my dear M. d'Artagnan; the king will not play any jokes with Monk, I assure you."

The flash of his eye was intercepted in its passage by D'Artagnan. Monk lowered his tone immediately: "The king," continued he, "is of too noble a nature; the king's heart is too high to allow him to wish ill to those who do him good."

"Oh, certainly!" cried D'Artagnan. "I am entirely

of your Grace's opinion with regard to his heart, but not as to his head, — it is good, but it is trifling."

"The king will not trifle with Monk, be assured."

"Then you are quite at ease, my Lord?"

"On that side, at least; yes, perfectly."

"Oh, I understand you; you are at ease so far as the king is concerned?"

"I have told you I was."

"But you are not so much so on my account?"

"I thought I had told you that I had faith in your loyalty and discretion."

"Without doubt, without doubt; but you must remember one thing —"

"What is that?"

"That I was not alone, that I had companions; and what companions!"

"Oh, yes, I know them."

"And, unfortunately, my Lord, they know you too."

"Well?"

"Well; they are yonder, at Boulogne, waiting for me."

"And you fear —"

"Yes, I fear that in my absence — *Parbleu!* if I were near them, I could answer for their silence."

"Was I not right in saying that the danger, if there was any danger, would not come from his Majesty, however disposed he may be to joke, but from your companions, as you say — To be laughed at by a king may be tolerable, but by the horse-boys and scamps of the army? Damnation!"

"Yes, I comprehend! that would be insupportable. That is why, my Lord, I came to say, — do you not think it would be better that I should set out for France as soon as possible?"

"Certainly, if you think your presence —"

"Would impose silence upon these scoundrels? Oh! I am sure of that, my Lord."

"Your presence will not prevent the report from spreading, if the tale has already transpired."

"Oh, it has not transpired, my Lord; I will guarantee that. At all events, be assured that I am determined upon one thing."

"What is that?"

"To blow out the brains of the first who shall have propagated that report, and of the first who has heard it; after which I will return to England to seek an asylum, and perhaps employment with your Grace."

"Oh, come back! come back!"

"Unfortunately, my Lord, I am acquainted with nobody here but your Grace; and if I should no longer find you, or if you should have forgotten me in your greatness?"

"Listen to me, M. d'Artagnan," replied Monk; "you are a superior gentleman, full of intelligence and courage; you merit all the good fortune this world can bring you: come with me into Scotland, and, I swear to you, I will create you a destiny which all may envy."

"Oh, my Lord, that is impossible at present. At present I have a sacred duty to perform; I have to watch over your glory, I have to prevent a low joker from tarnishing in the eyes of our contemporaries — who knows? in the eyes of posterity even — the splendor of your name."

"Of posterity, M. d'Artagnan?"

"Doubtless. It is necessary, as regards posterity, that all the details of that history should remain a mystery; for, admit that this unfortunate history of the deal box should spread, and it should be asserted that you had not re-established the king loyally and of your free will,

but in consequence of a compromise entered into at Scheveningen between you two; — it would be in vain for me to declare how the thing came about, — for me, who know. I should not be believed, and it would be said that I had received my part of the cake and was eating it."

Monk knitted his brow. "Glory, honor, probity," said he, "you are but words!"

"Mist!" replied D'Artagnan; "nothing but mist, through which nobody can see clearly."

"Well, then, go to France, my dear M. d'Artagnan," said Monk, "go; and to render England more attractive and agreeable to you, accept a remembrance of me."

"What now?" thought D'Artagnan.

"I have on the banks of the Clyde," continued Monk, "a little house beneath trees, — a cottage, as it is called here. To this house are attached a hundred acres of land. Accept it."

"Oh, my Lord! — "

"*Dame!* you will be there in your own home, and that will be the place of refuge you were talking of just now."

"For me to be obliged to your Lordship to such an extent! Really, your Grace, I am ashamed."

"Not at all, not at all, Monsieur," replied Monk, with an arch smile; "it is I who shall be obliged to you, and," pressing the hand of the musketeer, "I will go and draw up the deed of gift;" and he left the room.

D'Artagnan looked at him as he went out, with something of a pensive and even an agitated air.

"After all," said he, "he is a brave man. It is a sad reflection that it is only from fear of me, and not affection, that he acts thus. Well, I will endeavor that affection may follow." Then, after an instant's deeper reflection, — "Bah!" said he, "to what purpose? He is an English-

man;" and he in his turn went out, a little confused with the combat. "So," said he, "I am a land-owner! But how the devil am I to share the cottage with Planchet?— unless I give him the land and I take the château, or he takes the château and I— Nonsense! M. Monk will never allow me to share with a grocer a house he has inhabited. He is too proud for that. Besides, why should I say anything about it to him? It was not with the money of the company that I acquired that property, it was with my mother-wit alone; it is all mine, then. So now I will go and find Athos;" and he directed his steps towards the dwelling of the Comte de la Fère.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN REGULATED THE "PASSIVE" OF THE COMPANY BEFORE HE ESTABLISHED ITS "ACTIVE."

"DECIDEDLY," said D'Artagnan to himself, "I am in good vein. That star which shines once in the life of every man, which shone for Job and Irus, the most unfortunate of the Jews and the poorest of the Greeks, has come at last to shine on me. I will commit no folly, I will take advantage of it; it comes quite late enough to find me reasonable."

He supped that evening, in very good humor, with his friend Athos. He said nothing to him about the expected donation; but he could not forbear questioning his friend, while he was eating, about country produce, sowing and planting. Athos replied genially, as he always did. His idea was that D'Artagnan wished to become a proprietor; only he could not help regretting, more than once, the absence of the lively humor and amusing sallies of the cheerful companion of former days. In fact, D'Artagnan was so absorbed, that, with his knife, he took advantage of the grease left at the bottom of his plate, to trace ciphers and make additions of surprising rotundity.

The order, or rather license, for their embarkation arrived at Athos' lodgings that evening. At the same time this paper was remitted to the count, another messenger brought to D'Artagnan a little bundle of parchments, adorned with all the seals used in embellishing deeds of real estate in England. Athos surprised him turning over the leaves of these different deeds which effected the

transfer of property. The prudent Monk — others would say the generous Monk — had commuted the donation into a sale, and acknowledged the receipt of a sum of fifteen thousand livres as the price of the property ceded. The messenger being gone, D'Artagnan still continued reading. Athos watched him with a smile. D'Artagnan, surprising one of those smiles over his shoulder, put the parchments into their wrapper.

"I beg your pardon," said Athos.

"Oh, you are not indiscreet, my friend," replied the lieutenant; "I will tell you —"

"No, don't tell me anything, I beg you; orders are things so sacred, that to one's brother, one's father the person charged with such orders should never open his mouth. Thus I, who speak to you, and love you more tenderly than brother, father, or all the world —"

"Except your Raoul?"

"I shall love Raoul still better when he shall be a man, and I shall have seen him develop himself in all the phases of his character and his actions, — as I have seen you, my friend."

"You said, then, that you had an order likewise, and that you would not communicate it to me."

"Yes, my dear D'Artagnan."

The Gascon sighed. "There was a time," said he, "when you would have placed that order open upon the table, saying, 'D'Artagnan, read this scrawl to Porthos, Aramis, and me.'"

"That is true. Oh, that was the time of youth, confidence, the generous season when the blood commands, when it is warmed by feeling!"

"Well, Athos, will you allow me to tell you?"

"Speak, my friend!"

"That delightful time, that generous season, that

domination of the heated blood, were all very fine things, no doubt; but I do not regret them at all. It is absolutely like the period of studies. I have constantly met with fools who would boast of the days of *pensums*, ferules, and crusts of dry bread. It is singular, but I never loved all that: for my part, however active and sober I might be (you knew if I was so, Athos), so simple as I might appear in my clothes, I would not the less have preferred the embroideries of Porthos to my little porous cassock, which admitted the wind in winter and the sun in summer. Do you know, my friend, I shall always mistrust him who pretends to prefer evil to good. Now, in times past, all was evil with me,—the times past in which every month found a new hole in my cassock and in my skin, a gold crown less in my poor purse; of that execrable time of small beer and see-saw, I regret absolutely nothing, nothing, nothing but our friendship; for within me I have a heart, and it is a miracle that heart has not been dried up by the wind of poverty which passed through the holes of my cloak, or pierced by the swords of all shapes which passed through the holes in my poor flesh."

"Do not regret our friendship," said Athos; "that will only die with ourselves. Friendship is composed, above all things, of remembrances and habits; and if you have just now made a little satire upon mine, because I hesitate to tell you the nature of my mission into France—"

"Who? I? Oh, heavens! if you knew, my dear friend, how indifferent all the missions of the world will henceforth become to me!" and he laid his hand upon the parchment in his vest pocket.

Athos rose from the table and called the host, in order to pay the reckoning.

"Since I have known you, my friend," said D'Artagnan, "I have never discharged the reckoning. Porthos often

did, Aramis sometimes, and you — you almost always drew out your purse with the dessert. I am now rich, and should like to try if it is heroic to pay."

"Do so," said Athos, returning his purse to his pocket.

The two friends then directed their steps towards the port, not, however, without D'Artagnan's frequently turning round to watch the transport of his precious crowns. Night had just spread her thick veil over the yellow waters of the Thames; they heard those noises of casks and pulleys, the precursors of getting under sail which had so many times made the hearts of the musketeers beat when the dangers of the sea were the least of those they were going to face. This time they were to embark on board a large vessel which awaited them at Gravesend; and Charles II., always delicate in small matters, had sent one of his yachts, with twelve men of his Scotch guard, to do honor to the ambassador he was deputing to France. At midnight the yacht had deposited its passengers on board the vessel, and at eight o'clock in the morning the vessel landed the ambassador and his friend before the pier at Boulogne.

While the count, with Grimaud, was busy in procuring horses to go straight to Paris, D'Artagnan hastened to the hostelry where, according to his orders, his little army was to wait for him. These gentlemen were at breakfast upon oysters, fish, and aromatized brandy, when D'Artagnan appeared. They were all very gay, but not one of them had yet exceeded the bounds of reason. A hurrah of joy welcomed the general.

"Here I am," said D'Artagnan; "the campaign is ended. I have come to bring each his supplement of pay, as agreed upon." Their eyes sparkled. "I will lay a wager there are not, already, a hundred livres remaining in the purse of the richest among you."

"That is true!" cried they in chorus.

"Gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "then this is the last order. The treaty of commerce has been concluded, thanks to our exploit which made us masters of the most skilful financier of England; for now I am at liberty to confess to you that the man we had to carry off was the treasurer of General Monk."

This word "treasurer" produced a certain effect in his army. D'Artagnan observed that the eyes of Menneville alone did not evince perfect faith.

"This treasurer," continued D'Artagnan, "I have conveyed to a neutral territory, Holland; I have forced him to sign the treaty; I have even reconducted him to Newcastle; and as he was obliged to be satisfied with our proceedings towards him, — the deal box being always carried without jolting, and being lined softly, — I asked for a gratification for you. Here it is." He threw a respectable-looking purse upon the cloth; and all, involuntarily, stretched out their hands. "One moment, my lambs," said D'Artagnan; "if there are benefits, there are also charges."

"Oh! oh!" murmured they.

"We are about to find ourselves, my friends, in a position that would not be tenable for people without brains. I speak plainly; we are between the gallows and the Bastille."

"Oh! oh!" said the chorus.

"That is easy to be understood. It was necessary to explain to General Monk the disappearance of his treasurer. I waited for that purpose, till the very unhoped-for moment of the restoration of King Charles II., who is one of my friends."

The army exchanged a glance of satisfaction in reply to the sufficiently proud look of D'Artagnan. "The king being restored, I restored Monk his man of business, — a

little plucked, it is true, — but, in short, I restored him. Now, General Monk, when he pardoned me, — for he has pardoned me, — could not help repeating these words to me, which I charge every one of you to engrave deeply there, between the eyes, under the vault of the cranium: 'Monsieur, the joke has been a good one, but I don't naturally like jokes; if ever a word of what you have done' (you understand me, M. Menneville) 'escapes from your lips, or the lips of your companions, I have, in my government of Scotland and Ireland, seven hundred and forty-one wooden gibbets, of strong oak, clamped with iron, and newly greased every week. I will make a present of one of these gibbets to each of you; and observe well, M. d'Artagnan,' added he (remark it also, M. Menneville), 'I shall still have seven hundred and thirty left for my private pleasures. And still further — '"

"Ah! ah!" said the auxiliaries, "is there more still?"

"One trouble more. 'M. d'Artagnan, I send to the King of France the treaty in question, with a request that he will cast into the Bastille provisionally, and then send to me, all who have taken part in this expedition; and that is a prayer with which the king will certainly comply.'"

A cry of terror broke from all corners of the table.

"There! there!" said D'Artagnan, "this brave M. Monk has forgotten one thing, and that is that he does not know the name of any one of you; I alone know you, and it is not I, you may well believe, who will betray you. Why should I? As for you, I cannot suppose you will be silly enough to denounce yourselves; for then the king, to spare himself the expenses of feeding and lodging you, will send you off to Scotland, where the seven hundred and forty-one gibbets are to be found. That is all, Messieurs; I have not another word to add to

what I have had the honor to tell you. I am sure you have understood me perfectly well, have you not, M. Menneville?"

"Perfectly," replied the latter.

"Now the crowns!" said D'Artagnan. "Shut the doors," he cried; and opened the bag upon the table, from which rolled several fine gold crowns. Every one made a movement towards the floor.

"Gently!" cried D'Artagnan, "I insist upon it nobody stoops, and then I shall not be out in my reckoning." He found it all right; gave fifty of those splendid crowns to each man, and received as many benedictions as he bestowed pieces. "Now," said he, "if it were possible for you to reform a little, if you could become good and honest citizens —"

"That is rather difficult," said one of the troop.

"What then, Captain?" said another.

"Because I might be able to find you again; and, who knows? refreshed from time to time by some windfall —" He made a sign to Menneville, who listened to all he said with a composed air. "Menneville," said he, "come with me. Adieu, my brave fellows! I need not recommend you to be discreet."

Menneville followed him, while the salutations of the auxiliaries were mingled with the sweet sound of the money clinking in their pockets.

"Menneville," said D'Artagnan, when they were once in the street, "you are not duped; beware of being so. You do not appear to me to have any fear of the gibbets of Monk, or the Bastille of his Majesty King Louis XIV., but you will do me the favor of being afraid of me. Then listen: at the smallest word that shall escape you, I will kill you as I would a fowl. I have absolution from our holy Father the Pope in my pocket."

"I assure you I know absolutely nothing, my dear M. d'Artagnan, and that your words have all been to me so many articles of faith."

"I was quite sure you were an intelligent fellow," said the musketeer; "I have tried you for twenty-five years. These fifty gold crowns which I give you more than the rest, will prove the estimation I hold you in. Take them."

"Thanks, M. d'Artagnan," said Menneville.

"With that sum you can really become an honest man," replied D'Artagnan, in the most serious tone possible. "It would be disgraceful for a mind like yours, and a name you no longer dare to bear, to sink forever under the rust of an evil life. Become a gallant man, Menneville, and live for a year upon those hundred gold crowns: it is a good provision; twice that of a high officer. In a year come to me, and, *mordioux!* I will make something of you."

Menneville swore, as his comrades had sworn, that he would be as mute as the tomb. And yet some one must have spoken; and as to a certainty it was not one of the nine companions, as equally certainly it was not Menneville, it must have been D'Artagnan, who in his quality of a Gascon had his tongue very near his lips. For in short if it was not he, who could it be? And how can it be explained that the secret of the deal box pierced with holes should come to our knowledge, and in so complete a fashion that we have, as has been seen, related the history of it in all its most intimate details, — details which, besides, throw a light as new as unexpected upon all that portion of the history of England which has been left, up to the present day, completely in the shade by our brother historians?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN WHICH IT IS SEEN THAT THE FRENCH GROCER HAD ALREADY BEEN ESTABLISHED IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

His accounts once settled, and his recommendations made, D'Artagnan thought of nothing but regaining Paris as soon as possible. Athos, on his part, was anxious to reach home and to repose a little. However entire may remain the character and the man after the fatigues of a voyage, the traveller perceives with pleasure, at the close of the day, — even though the day has been a fine one, — that night is approaching, and will bring a little sleep with it. So, from Boulogne to Paris, jogging on side by side, the two friends, in some degree absorbed each in his individual thoughts, conversed of nothing sufficiently interesting for us to present to our readers. Each of them, given up to his personal reflections, and constructing his future after his own fashion, was, above all, anxious to abridge the distance by speed. Athos and D'Artagnan arrived at the barriers of Paris on the evening of the fourth day after leaving Boulogne.

"Where are you going, my friend?" asked Athos. "I shall direct my course straight to my hotel."

"And I straight to my partner's."

"To Planchet's?"

"Good Lord! yes; at the Pilon d'Or."

"Well, but shall we not meet again?"

"If you remain in Paris, yes; for I shall stay here."

"No; after having embraced Raoul, with whom I have appointed a meeting at my hotel, I shall set out immediately for La Fère."

"Well, adieu, then, dear and true friend."

"*Au revoir!* I should rather say, for why can you not come and live with me at Blois? You are free; you are rich. I will purchase for you, if you like, a handsome property in the environs of Chiverny or of Bracieux. On the one side you will have the finest woods in the world, which join those of Chambord; on the other, admirable marshes. You who love sporting, and who whether you admit it or not are a poet, my dear friend, you will find pheasants, rail, and teal, without reckoning sunsets and excursions on the water, to make you fancy yourself Nimrod and Apollo themselves. Awaiting the acquisition, you can live at La Fère, and we will go together to fly our hawks among the vines, as Louis XIII. used to do. That is a quiet amusement for old fellows like us."

D'Artagnan took the hands of Athos in his own. "Dear count," said he, "I will say neither 'Yes' nor 'No.' Let me pass in Paris the time necessary for the regulation of my affairs, and accustom myself, by degrees, to the heavy and glittering idea which is beating in my brains and dazzles them. I am rich, do you see; and from this moment till I shall have acquired the habit of being rich, — I know myself, — I shall be an unendurable animal. Now, I am not enough of a fool to wish to appear to have lost my wits before a friend like you, Athos. The habit is handsome, the habit is richly gilded, but it is new, and does not seem to fit me."

Athos smiled. "So be it," said he. "But *à propos* of this habit, dear D'Artagnan, will you allow me to offer you a little advice?"

"Yes, willingly."

"You will not be angry?"

"Proceed."

"When wealth falls to any one late or all at once, he will most likely become a miser, to avoid change, — that is to say, will not spend much more money than he had done before; or else will become a prodigal, and contract so many debts as to become poor again."

"Oh! but what you say looks very much like a sophism, my dear philosopher."

"I do not think so. Will you become a miser?"

"No, *pardieu!* I was one already, having nothing. Let us change."

"Then be prodigal."

"Still less, *mordioux!* Debts terrify me. Creditors appear to me, by anticipation, those devils who turn the damned upon the gridirons; and as patience is not my dominant virtue, I am always tempted to thrash those devils."

"You are the wisest man I know, and stand in no need of counsel from any one. Great fools must they be who think they have anything to teach you. But are we not at the Rue St. Honoré?"

"Yes, dear Athos."

"Look yonder, on the left, that small, long white house is the hotel at which I lodge. You may observe that it has but two stories. I occupy the first; the other is let to an officer, whose duties oblige him to be absent eight or nine months in the year, — so I am in that house as at my own home, without the expense."

"Oh, how well you manage, Athos! What order and what liberality! They are what I wish to unite. But of what use to try? That comes from birth, and cannot be acquired."

"Flatterer! Well, adieu, dear friend! By the way,

remember me to Master Planchet; he is still a lad of spirit, is he not?"

"And of heart too, Athos. Adieu."

And they separated. During all this conversation D'Artagnan had not for a moment lost sight of a certain pack-horse, in whose panniers, under some hay, were spread the money-bags with the portmanteau. Nine o'clock was striking at St. Merri; Planchet's lads were shutting up his shop. D'Artagnan stopped the postilion who rode the pack-horse, at the corner of the Rue des Lombards, under a pent-house, and calling one of Planchet's boys, desired him not only to take care of the two horses, but to watch the postilion; after which he entered the shop of the grocer, who had just finished supper, and who in his little private room was, with some anxiety, consulting the calendar, from which every evening he scratched out the day that was past. At the moment when Planchet, according to his daily custom, with the back of his pen, uttering a sigh, was erasing another day, D'Artagnan kicked with his feet at the door, and the blow made his steel spur jingle.

"Oh, good Lord!" cried Planchet.

The worthy grocer could say no more; he perceived his partner. D'Artagnan entered with a bent back and a dull eye; the Gascon had an idea with regard to Planchet.

"Good God!" thought the grocer, looking earnestly at the traveller, "he looks very sad." The musketeer sat down.

"My dear M. d'Artagnan!" said Planchet, with a horrible palpitation of the heart. "Here you are! and your health?"

"Tolerably good, Planchet, tolerably good!" said D'Artagnan, with a profound sigh.

"You have not been wounded, I hope?"

"Pugh!"

"Ah! I see," continued Planchet, more and more alarmed, "the expedition has been a trying one?"

"Yes," said D'Artagnan. A shudder ran through the whole frame of Planchet. "I should like to have something to drink," said the musketeer, raising his head piteously.

Planchet ran to the cupboard, and poured D'Artagnan out some wine in a large glass. D'Artagnan examined the bottle.

"What wine is that?" asked he.

"Alas! that which you prefer, Monsieur," said Planchet; "that good old Anjou wine, which was one day nearly costing us all so dear."

"Ah!" replied D'Artagnan, with a melancholy smile, "ah, my poor Planchet! ought I still to drink good wine?"

"Come, my dear master," said Planchet, making a superhuman effort, while all his contracted muscles, his paleness, and his trembling betrayed the most acute anguish. "Come! I have been a soldier, and consequently have some courage; do not keep me in suspense, dear M. d'Artagnan: our money is lost, is it not?"

Before answering, D'Artagnan made a pause which seemed an age to the poor grocer. Meanwhile he did nothing but turn about upon his chair.

"And if that were the case," said he slowly, moving his head up and down, "what would you say, my dear friend?"

Planchet, from being pale, turned yellow. It might have been thought he was going to swallow his tongue, so full became his throat, so red were his eyes.

"Twenty thousand livres!" murmured he. "Twenty thousand livres, though!"

D'Artagnan, with his neck elongated, his legs stretched out, and his hands hanging listlessly, looked like a statue of discouragement. Planchet heaved a sigh from the deepest cavities of his breast.

"Well," said he, "I see how it is. Let us be men! It is all over, is it not? The principal thing is, Monsieur, that you have saved your life."

"Doubtless, doubtless, life is something; but I am ruined!"

"*Cordieu!* Monsieur," said Planchet, "if it is so, we must not despair for that. You shall become a grocer with me; I will make you my partner, we will share the profits; and if there should be no more profits, well then we will share the almonds, raisins, and prunes, and we will nibble together the last quarter of Dutch cheese."

D'Artagnan could hold out no longer. "*Mordioux!*" cried he, with great emotion, "thou art a brave fellow, by my honor, Planchet! You have not been playing comedy, have you? You have not seen the pack-horse with the money-bags under the shed yonder?"

"What horse? What money-bags?" said Planchet, whose trembling heart began to suggest that D'Artagnan was mad.

"Why! the English money-bags, *mordioux*." said D'Artagnan, all radiant, quite transfigured.

"Ah, good God!" articulated Planchet, drawing back before the dazzling fire of his eyes.

"Imbecile!" cried D'Artagnan, "you think me mad! *Mordioux!* on the contrary, never was my head more clear, or my heart more joyous. To the money-bags, Planchet, to the money-bags!"

"My God! to what money-bags?"

D'Artagnan pushed Planchet towards the window.

"Under the pent-house, yonder, don't you see a horse?"

"Yes."

"Don't you see how his back is laden?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Don't you see your lad chatting with the postilion?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"Well, you know the name of that lad, because he is your own. Call him."

"Abdon! Abdon!" vociferated Planchet from the window.

"Bring the horse!" said D'Artagnan.

"Bring the horse!" screamed Planchet.

"Now give ten livres to the postilion," said D'Artagnan, in the tone he would have employed in commanding a manœuvre; "two lads to bring up the first two sacks, two to bring up the last two, — and move, *mordioux!* be alive!"

Planchet precipitated himself down the stairs as if the devil were at his heels. The moment after, the lads ascended the staircase, bending beneath their burden. D'Artagnan sent them off to their garrets, carefully closed the door, and addressing Planchet, who, in his turn, looked a little wild, —

"Now we are by ourselves," said he; and he spread upon the floor a large cover, and emptied the first sack into it. Planchet did the same with the second; then D'Artagnan, all in a tremble, let out the precious bowels of the third with a knife. When Planchet heard the intoxicating sound of the silver and gold; when he saw bubbling out of the bags the shining crowns, which glittered like fish from the sweep-net; when he felt himself plunging his hands up to the elbow in that still rising tide of yellow and silver pieces, — a giddiness seized him,

and he sank, like a man who is thunderstruck, heavily down upon the enormous heap, which his weight caused to roll away in all directions. Planchet, suffocated with joy, had lost his senses. D'Artagnan threw a glass of white wine in his face, which immediately recalled him to life.

"Ah, good heavens! good heavens! good heavens!" said Planchet, wiping his mustache and beard.

At that time, as they do now, grocers wore the cavalier mustache and the lansquenet beard; but silver baths, already become rare in those days, have become almost unknown now.

"*Mordioux!*" said D'Artagnan, "there are a hundred thousand livres for you, partner. Draw your share, if you please; and I will draw mine."

"Oh, the lovely sum! M. d'Artagnan, the lovely sum!"

"I confess that half an hour ago I regretted that I had to give you so much; but I now no longer regret it. Thou art a brave grocer, Planchet. There, let us close our accounts; for, as they say, short reckonings make long friends."

"Oh! rather, in the first place, tell me the whole history," said Planchet; "that must be better than the money."

"My faith!" said D'Artagnan, stroking his mustache, "I can't say no; and if ever the historian turns to me for information, he will be able to say he has not dipped his bucket into a dry spring. Listen, then, Planchet, I will tell you all about it."

"And I will build piles of crowns," said Planchet. "Begin, my dear master."

"Well, this is it," said D'Artagnan, drawing breath.

"And that is it," said Planchet, picking up his first handful of crowns.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MAZARIN'S GAMING-PARTY.

In a large chamber of the Palais-Royal, covered with a dark-colored velvet, which threw into strong relief the gilded frames of a great number of magnificent pictures, on the evening of the arrival of the two Frenchmen, the whole court was assembled before the alcove of M. le Cardinal de Mazarin, who was giving a party, for the purposes of play, to the king and queen. A small screen separated three prepared tables. At one of these tables the king and the two queens were seated. Louis XIV., placed opposite to the young queen, his wife, smiled upon her with an expression of real happiness. Anne of Austria held the cards against the cardinal; and her daughter-in-law assisted her in her game, when she was not engaged in smiling at her husband. As for the cardinal, who, very weary, reclined his attenuated form upon his bed, his cards were held by the Comtesse de Soissons, and he watched them with an incessant look of eagerness and cupidity.

The cardinal had been painted by Bernouin; but the rouge, which glowed only on his cheeks, threw into stronger contrast the sickly pallor of the rest of his countenance and the shining yellow of his brow. His eyes alone acquired a more lively expression from this auxiliary; and upon those sick man's eyes were turned, from time to time, the uneasy looks of the king, the queens, and the courtiers. The fact is, that the two eyes of Signor

Mazarin's Gaming Party.



Mazarin were the stars more or less brilliant in which the France of the seventeenth century read its destiny every evening and every morning. Monseigneur neither won nor lost; he was, therefore, neither gay nor sad. It was a stagnation in which, full of pity for him, Anne of Austria would not have willingly left him; but in order to attract the attention of the sick man by some brilliant stroke, she must have either won or lost. To win would have been dangerous, because Mazarin would have changed his indifference for an ugly grimace; to lose would likewise have been dangerous, because she must have cheated, and the infanta, who watched her game, would doubtless have exclaimed against her partiality for Mazarin. Profiting by this calm, the courtiers were chatting. When not in a bad humor, M. de Mazarin was a very debonair prince; and he, who prevented nobody from singing, provided they paid, was not tyrant enough to prevent people from talking, provided they made up their minds to lose. They were chatting, then. At the first table the king's younger brother, Philip, Duc d'Anjou, was admiring his handsome face in the glass of a box. His favorite, the Chevalier de Lorraine, leaning over the *fauteuil* of the prince, was listening, with secret envy, to the Comte de Guiche, another of Philip's favorites, who was relating in choice terms the various vicissitudes of fortune of the royal adventurer Charles II. He told, as so many fabulous events, all the history of his peregrinations in Scotland, and his terrors when the enemy's party was so closely on his track; of nights passed in trees, and days passed in hunger and combats. By degrees, the fate of the unfortunate king interested his auditors so greatly that the play languished even at the royal table; and the young king, with a pensive look and downcast eye, followed, without appearing to give any attention to it,

the smallest details of this Odyssey, very picturesquely related by the Comte de Guiche.

The Comtesse de Soissons interrupted the narrator. "Confess, Count, you are inventing."

"Madame, I am repeating like a parrot all the stories related to me by different Englishmen. I am compelled to my shame to say that I am as textual as a copy."

"Charles II. would have died before he could have endured all that."

Louis XIV. raised his intelligent and proud head. "Madame," said he in a grave tone, still partaking somewhat of the timid child, "Monsieur the Cardinal will tell you that in my minority the affairs of France were in jeopardy, and that if I had been older, and obliged to take sword in hand, it would sometimes have been to gain the evening meal."

"Thanks to God," said the cardinal, who spoke for the first time, "your Majesty exaggerates, and your supper has always been ready, with that of your servants."

The king colored.

"Oh!" cried Philip, inconsiderately, from his place, and without ceasing to admire himself, "I recollect once, at Milan, the supper was laid for nobody, and that the king ate two thirds of a slice of bread, and left to me the other third."

The whole assembly, seeing Mazarin smile, began to laugh. Courtiers flatter kings with the remembrance of past distresses, as with the hopes of future good fortune.

"It is not to be denied that the crown of France has always remained firm upon the heads of its kings," Anne of Austria hastened to say, "and that it has fallen from that of the King of England; and when, by chance, that crown oscillated a little, — for there are throne-quakes as well as earthquakes, — every time, I

say, that rebellion threatened it, a good victory restored tranquillity."

"With a few gems added to the crown," said Mazarin.

The Comte de Guiche was silent; the king composed his countenance; and Mazarin exchanged looks with Anne of Austria, as if to thank her for her intervention.

"It is of no consequence," said Philip, smoothing his hair. "My cousin Charles is not handsome, but he is very brave, and has fought like a reiter; and if he continues to fight thus, no doubt he will finish by gaining a battle, like Rocroy — "

"He has no soldiers," interrupted the Chevalier de Lorraine.

"The King of Holland, his ally, will give him some. I would willingly have given him some if I had been King of France."

Louis XIV. blushed excessively. Mazarin affected to be more attentive to his game than ever.

"By this time," resumed the Comte de Guiche, "the fortune of this unhappy prince is decided. If he has been deceived by Monk, he is ruined. Imprisonment, perhaps death, will finish what exile, battles, and privations have begun."

Mazarin's brow became clouded.

"Is it certain," said Louis XIV., "that his Majesty Charles II. has quitted the Hague?"

"Quite certain, your Majesty," replied the young man; "my father has received a letter containing all the details. It is even known that the king has landed at Dover; some fishermen saw him entering the port. The rest is still a mystery."

"I should like to know the rest," said Philip, impetuously. "You know, — you, my brother."

Louis XIV. colored again. That was the third time

within an hour. "Ask Monsieur the Cardinal," replied he, in a tone which made Mazarin, Anne of Austria, and everybody else open their eyes.

"Which means, my son," said Anne of Austria, laughing, "that the king does not like affairs of State to be talked of out of the council."

Philip received the reprimand with a good grace, and bowed, first smiling at his brother, and then at his mother. But Mazarin saw from the corner of his eye that a group was about to be formed in an angle of the room; that the Duc d'Anjou, with the Comte de Guiche and the Chevalier de Lorraine, prevented from talking aloud, might say in a whisper what it was not convenient should be said aloud. He was beginning then to dart at them glances full of mistrust and uneasiness, inviting Anne of Austria to throw perturbation amid the unlawful assembly, when suddenly Bernouin, entering under the tapestry of the bedroom, whispered in the ear of his master, "Monseigneur, an envoy from his Majesty the King of England!"

Mazarin could not help exhibiting a slight emotion, which was perceived by the king. To avoid being indiscreet, still less than not to appear useless, Louis XIV. rose immediately, and approaching his Eminence, wished him good-night. All the assembly had risen with a great noise of rolling of chairs and tables being pushed away.

"Let everybody depart by degrees," said Mazarin in a whisper to Louis XIV., "and be so good as to excuse me a few minutes. I am going to expedite an affair about which I wish to converse with your Majesty this very evening."

"And the queens?" asked Louis XIV.

"And M. le Duc d'Anjou," said his Eminence.

At the same time he turned round in his recess, the curtains of which, in falling, concealed the bed. The cardinal, nevertheless, did not lose sight of the conspirators.

"M. le Comte de Guiche," said he in a fretful voice, while putting on, behind the curtain, his *robe de chambre*, with the assistance of Bernouin.

"I am here, Monseigneur," said the young man, as he approached.

"Take my cards; you are lucky. Win a little money for me of these gentlemen."

"Yes, Monseigneur."

The young man sat down at the table from which the king withdrew to talk with the two queens. A serious game was begun between the Count and several rich courtiers. In the mean time Philip was discussing questions of dress with the Chevalier de Lorraine, and they had ceased to hear the rustling of the cardinal's silk robe from behind the curtain. His Eminence had followed Bernouin into the cabinet adjoining the bedroom.

CHAPTER XL.

AN AFFAIR OF STATE.

THE cardinal, on passing into his cabinet, found the Comte de la Fère, who was waiting for him, engaged in admiring a very fine Raphael placed over a sideboard covered with plate. His Eminence came in softly, lightly, and silently as a shadow, and surprised the count, as he was accustomed to do, pretending to divine, by the simple expression of the face of his interlocutor, what would be the result of the conversation. But this time Mazarin was disappointed in his expectation; he read nothing upon the face of Athos, not even the respect he was accustomed to meet with on all faces. Athos was dressed in black, with a simple lacing of silver. He wore the Holy Ghost, the Garter, and the Golden Fleece, — three orders of such importance that a king alone, or else a player, could wear them at once.

Mazarin rummaged a long time in his somewhat troubled memory to recall the name he ought to give to this icy figure, but he did not succeed. "I am told," said he, at length, "that you have a message from England for me."

And he sat down, dismissing Bernouin and Brienne, who in his capacity as secretary was getting his pen ready.

"From his Majesty the King of England; yes, your Eminence."

"You speak very good French, for an Englishman, Monsieur," said Mazarin, graciously, looking through his

fingers at the Holy Ghost, Garter, and Golden Fleece, but more particularly at the face of the messenger.

"I am not an Englishman, but a Frenchman, Monsieur the Cardinal," replied Athos.

"It is remarkable that the King of England should choose a Frenchman for his ambassador; it is an excellent augury. Your name, Monsieur, if you please."

"Comte de la Fère," replied Athos, bowing more slightly than the ceremonial and pride of the all-powerful minister required.

Mazarin bent his shoulders, as if to say, "I do not know that name."

Athos did not alter his carriage.

"And you come, Monsieur," continued Mazarin, "to tell me — "

"I come on the part of his Majesty the King of Great Britain to announce to the King of France" — Mazarin frowned — "to announce to the King of France," continued Athos, imperturbably, "the happy restoration of his Majesty Charles II. to the throne of his ancestors."

This shade did not escape his cunning Eminence. Mazarin was too much accustomed to mankind, not to see in the cold and almost haughty politeness of Athos an index of hostility, which was not of the temperature of that hothouse called a court.

"You have powers, I suppose?" asked Mazarin, in a short, querulous tone.

"Yes, Monseigneur;" and the word "monseigneur" came so painfully from the lips of Athos, that it might be said it skinned them.

"In that case, show them."

Athos took a despatch from an embroidered velvet bag which he carried under his doublet. The cardinal held

out his hand for it. "Your pardon, Monseigneur," said Athos. "My despatch is for the king."

"Since you are a Frenchman, Monsieur, you ought to know what the position of a prime minister is at the court of France."

"There was a time," replied Athos, "when I occupied myself with the importance of prime ministers; but I formed, long ago, a resolution to treat no longer with any but the king."

"Then, Monsieur," said Mazarin, who began to be irritated, "you will see neither the minister nor the king."

Mazarin rose. Athos replaced his despatch in its bag, bowed gravely, and took several steps towards the door. This coolness exasperated Mazarin. "What strange diplomatic proceedings are these!" cried he. "Are we again in the times in which Cromwell sent us bullies in the guise of *chargés d'affaires?* You want nothing, Monsieur, but the steel cap on your head, and a Bible at your girdle."

"Monsieur," said Athos, dryly, "I have never had, as you have, the advantage of treating with M. Cromwell; and I have only seen his *chargés d'affaires* sword in hand: I am therefore ignorant of how he treated with prime ministers. As for the King of England, Charles II., I know that when he writes to his Majesty King Louis XIV., he does not write to his Eminence the Cardinal Mazarin. I see no diplomacy in that distinction."

"Ah!" cried Mazarin, raising his attenuated hand and striking his head, "I remember now!" Athos looked at him in astonishment. "Yes, that is it," said the cardinal, continuing to look at his interlocutor; "yes, that is certainly it. I know you now, Monsieur. Ah! *diavolo!* I am no longer astonished."

"In fact, *I* was astonished that with the excellent

memory your Eminence has," replied Athos, smiling, "you did not recognize me before."

"Always refractory and grumbling, Monsieur — Monsieur — What do they call you? Stop! — a name of a river — Potamos; no — the name of an island — Naxos; no, *per Giove!* — the name of a mountain — Athos! now I have it. Delighted to see you again, and to be no longer at Rueil, where you and your damned companions made me pay ransom. Fronde! still Fronde! accursed Fronde! Oh, what a source of evil! Why, Monsieur, have your antipathies survived mine? If any one had cause to complain, I think it could not be you, who got out of the affair not only in a sound skin, but with the *cordon* of the Holy Ghost round your neck."

"Monsieur the Cardinal," replied Athos, "permit me to dispense with considerations of that kind. I have a mission to fulfil. Will you assist me in fulfilling that mission?"

"I am astonished," said Mazarin, quite delighted at having regained the remembrance, and bristling with malicious points, — "I am astonished, Monsieur — Athos — that a Frondeur like you should have accepted a mission to Mazarin, as used to be said in the good old times — " and Mazarin began to laugh, in spite of a painful cough, which cut short his sentences, converting them into sobs.

"I have only accepted the mission to the King of France, Monsieur the Cardinal," retorted the count, though with less asperity, for he thought he had sufficiently the advantage to show himself moderate.

"And yet, Monsieur the Frondeur," said Mazarin, gayly, "the affair with which you charge yourself must, from the king — "

"With which I am charged, Monseigneur. I do not run after affairs."

"Be it so. I say that this negotiation must pass through my hands. Let us lose no precious time, then. Tell me the conditions."

"I have had the honor of assuring your Eminence that the letter alone of his Majesty King Charles II. contains the revelation of his wishes."

"Pooh! you are ridiculous with your obstinacy, M. Athos. It is plain you have kept company with the Puritans yonder. As to your secret, I know it better than you do; and you have done wrongly, perhaps, in not having shown some respect for a very old and suffering man, who has labored much during his life, and kept the field bravely for his ideas, as you have for yours. — You will not communicate your letter to me? You will say nothing to me? Wonderfully well! Come with me into my chamber; you shall speak to the king — and before the king. Now, then, one last word: who gave you the Fleece? I remember you passed for having the Garter; but as to the Fleece, I did not know —"

"Recently, Monseigneur, Spain, on the occasion of the marriage of his Majesty Louis XIV., sent King Charles II. a brevet of the Fleece in blank; Charles II. immediately transmitted it to me, filling up the blank with my name."

Mazarin arose, and leaning on the arm of Bernouin, returned to his private recess at the moment the name of Monsieur the Prince was being announced. The Prince de Condé, the first prince of the blood, the conqueror of Rocroy, Lens, and Nordlingen, was, in fact, entering the apartments of Monseigneur de Mazarin, followed by his gentlemen, and had already saluted the king, when the prime minister raised his curtain. Athos had time to see Raoul press the hand of the Comte de Guiche, and to return him a smile for his respectful bow. He had time, likewise, to see the radiant countenance of the

cardinal, when he perceived before him, upon the table, an enormous heap of gold, which the Comte de Guiche had won in a run of luck, after his Eminence had confided his cards to him. So, forgetting ambassador, embassy, and prince, his first thought was of the gold. "What!" cried the old man, "all that — won?"

"Some fifty thousand crowns; yes, Monseigneur," replied the Comte de Guiche, rising. "Must I give up my place to your Eminence, or shall I continue?"

"Give up! give up! you are mad. You would lose all you have won. *Peste!*"

"Monseigneur!" said the Prince de Condé, bowing.

"Good-evening, Monsieur the Prince," said the minister, in a careless tone; "it is very kind of you to visit an old sick friend."

"A friend!" murmured the Comte de la Fère, at witnessing with stupor this monstrous collocation of words, — "friend, when the parties are Condé and Mazarin!"

Mazarin seemed to divine the thought of the Frondeur, for he smiled upon him with triumph; and immediately, — "Sire," said he to the king, "I have the honor of presenting to your Majesty, M. le Comte de la Fère, ambassador from his Britannic Majesty. An affair of State, Messieurs," added he, waving his hand to all who filled the chamber, and who, the Prince de Condé at their head, all disappeared at the simple gesture. Raoul, after a last look cast at the count, followed M. de Condé. Philip of Anjou and the queen appeared to be consulting about departing.

"A family affair," said Mazarin, suddenly, detaining them in their seats. "This gentleman is bearer of a letter, in which King Charles II., completely restored to his throne, demands an alliance between Monsieur, the brother of the king, and Mademoiselle Henrietta, grand-

daughter of Henry IV. Will you pass your credentials to the king, Monsieur the Count?"

Athos remained for a minute stupefied. How could the minister possibly know the contents of the letter, which had never been out of his keeping for a single instant? Nevertheless, always master of himself, he held out the despatch to the young king, Louis XIV., who took it with a blush. A solemn silence reigned in the chamber of the cardinal. It was only troubled by the dull sound of the gold which Mazarin, with his yellow, dry hand, piled up in a box, while the king was reading.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE RECITAL.

THE malice of the cardinal did not leave much for the ambassador to say; nevertheless, the word "restored" had struck the king, who, addressing the count, upon whom his eyes had been fixed since that person's entrance,—"Monsieur," said he, "will you have the kindness to give us some details of English affairs? You come from that country, you are a Frenchman, and the orders which I see glitter upon your person announce you to be a man of merit as well as a man of quality."

"Monsieur," said the cardinal, turning towards the queen-mother, "is an ancient servant of your Majesty's, M. le Comte de la Fère."

Anne of Austria was as oblivious as a queen whose life had been mingled with fine and stormy days. She looked at Mazarin, whose malign smile promised her something annoying; then, by another look, she solicited from Athos an explanation.

"Monsieur," continued the cardinal, "was a Tréville musketeer, in the service of the late king. Monsieur is well acquainted with England, whither he has made several voyages at various periods; he is a subject of the highest merit."

These words contained allusion to all the remembrances which Anne of Austria dreaded to revive. "England,"—that was her hatred of Richelieu and her love

of Buckingham; "a Tréville musketeer," — that was the whole Odyssey of the triumphs which had made the heart of the young woman throb, and of the dangers which had been so near overturning the throne of the young queen. These words had much power; for they rendered mute and attentive all the royal personages, who, with widely diverse sentiments, at once tried to reconstruct the mysterious years, which the young among them had not seen, and which the old had believed to be forever effaced.

"Speak, Monsieur," said Louis XIV., the first to escape from troubles, suspicions, and remembrances.

"Yes, speak," added Mazarin, to whom the little piece of malice inflicted upon Anne of Austria had restored energy and gayety.

"Sire," said the count, "a sort of miracle has changed the whole destiny of Charles II. What men till that time had been unable to do, God resolved to accomplish."

Mazarin coughed, while tossing about in his bed.

"King Charles II.," continued Athos, "left the Hague neither as a fugitive nor as a conqueror, but like an absolute king, who, after a distant voyage from his kingdom, returns amid universal benedictions."

"A great miracle, indeed," said Mazarin; "for if the news was true, King Charles II., who has just returned amid benedictions, went away amid musket-shots."

The king remained impassive. Philip, younger and more frivolous, could not repress a smile, which flattered Mazarin as an applause of his pleasantry.

"It is plain," said the king, "there is a miracle; but God, who does so much for kings, Monsieur the Count, nevertheless employs the hand of man to bring about the triumph of His designs. To what men does Charles II. principally owe his re-establishment?"

"Why," interrupted Mazarin, without any regard for the self-love of the king, "does not your Majesty know that it is to M. Monk?"

"I ought to know it," replied Louis XIV., resolutely; "and yet I ask Monsieur the ambassador the causes of the change in this M. Monk."

"And your Majesty touches precisely the question," replied Athos; "for without the miracle I have had the honor to speak of, M. Monk would probably have remained an implacable enemy to Charles II. God willed that a strange, bold, and ingenious idea should enter into the mind of a certain man, while a devoted and courageous idea took possession of the mind of another man. The combination of these two ideas brought about such a change in the position of M. Monk that from an inveterate enemy he became a friend to the deposed king."

"These are exactly the details I asked for," said the king. "Who and what are the two men of whom you speak?"

"Two Frenchmen, Sire."

"Indeed! I am glad of that."

"And the two ideas," said Mazarin, — "I am more curious about ideas than about men, for my part."

"Yes," murmured the king.

"The second idea — the devoted, courageous idea — the less important, Sire — was to go and dig up a million in gold, buried by King Charles I. at Newcastle, and to purchase with that gold the adherence of Monk."

"Oh! oh!" said Mazarin, reanimated by the word "million." "But Newcastle was at the time occupied by Monk."

"Yes, Monsieur the Cardinal, and that is why I venture to call the idea courageous as well as devoted. The plan was, — if Monk should refuse the offers of the nego-

tiator, — to reinstate King Charles II. in possession of this million, which was to be torn, as it were, from the loyalty of General Monk, if not from his loyalism. This was effected, in spite of many difficulties: the general proved to be loyal, and allowed the money to be taken away."

"It seems to me," said the timid, thoughtful king, "that Charles II. could not have known of this million while he was in Paris."

"It seems to me," rejoined the cardinal, maliciously, "that his Majesty the King of Great Britain knew perfectly well of this million, but that he preferred having two millions to having one."

"Sire," said Athos, firmly, "the King of England while in France was so poor that he had not even money to take the post, so destitute of hope that he frequently thought of dying. He was so entirely ignorant of the existence of the million at Newcastle, that but for a gentleman, — one of your Majesty's subjects, the moral depositary of the million, and who revealed the secret to King Charles II., — that prince would still be vegetating in the most cruel oblivion."

"Let us pass on to the strange, bold, and ingenious idea," interrupted Mazarin, whose sagacity foresaw a check. "What was that idea?"

"This: M. Monk being the only obstacle to the re-establishment of the fallen king, a Frenchman imagined the idea of suppressing this obstacle."

"Oh! oh! but he is a scoundrel, that Frenchman," said Mazarin; "and the idea is not so ingenious as to prevent its author being tied up by the neck at the Place de Grève, by decree of the Parliament."

"Your Eminence is mistaken," replied Athos, dryly. "I did not say that the Frenchman in question had re-

solved to assassinate M. Monk, but only to suppress him. The words of the French language have a value which the gentlemen of France know perfectly. Besides, this is an affair of war; and when men serve kings against their enemies they are not to be condemned by a parliament, — they have God. This French gentleman, then, formed the idea of gaining possession of the person of Monk, and he executed his plan."

The king became animated at the recital of great actions. The king's younger brother struck the table with his hand, exclaiming, "Ah, that is fine!"

"He carried off Monk?" said the king. "Why, Monk was in his camp."

"And the gentleman was alone, Sire."

"That is marvellous!" said Philip.

"Marvellous indeed!" cried the king.

"Good! There are two little lions unchained," murmured the cardinal. And with an air of spite, which he did not dissemble, said aloud, "I am unacquainted with these details; will you guarantee the authenticity of them, Monsieur?"

"All the more easily, Monsieur the Cardinal, from having seen the events."

"You have?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

The king had involuntarily drawn close to the count; the Duc d'Anjou had turned sharply round, and pressed Athos on the other side.

"Next, Monsieur, next!" cried both at the same time.

"Sire, M. Monk, being taken by the Frenchman, was brought to King Charles II. at the Hague. The king restored Monk his liberty; and the grateful general, in return, gave Charles II. the throne of Great Britain,

for which so many valiant men have contended without result."

Philip clapped his hands with enthusiasm; Louis XIV., more reflective, turned towards the Comte de la Fère.

"Is this true," said he, "in all its details?"

"Absolutely true, Sire."

"That one of my gentlemen knew the secret of the million, and kept it?"

"Yes, Sire."

"The name of that gentleman?"

"It was your humble servant," said Athos, simply.

A murmur of admiration made the heart of Athos swell with pleasure. He had reason to be proud, at least. Mazarin himself had raised his arms towards heaven.

"Monsieur," said the king, "I will seek, I will find, means to reward you." Athos made a movement. "Oh, not for your probity, — to be paid for that would humiliate you; but I owe you a reward for having participated in the restoration of my brother, King Charles II."

"Certainly," said Mazarin.

"It is the triumph of a good cause which fills the whole house of France with joy," said Anne of Austria.

"I continue," said Louis XIV.: "Is it also true that a single man penetrated to Monk, in his camp, and carried him off?"

"That man had ten auxiliaries, taken from an inferior rank."

"Nothing but that?"

"Nothing more."

"And you call him?"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan, formerly lieutenant of the Musketeers of your Majesty."

Anne of Austria colored; Mazarin became yellow with shame; Louis XIV. was deeply thoughtful, and a drop of

sweat fell from his pale brow. "What men!" murmured he; and involuntarily he darted a glance at the minister, which would have terrified him, if Mazarin at the moment had not concealed his head under his pillow.

"Monsieur," said the young Duc d'Anjou, placing his hand, delicate and white as that of a woman, upon the arm of Athos, "tell that brave man, I beg you, that Monsieur, brother of the king, will to-morrow drink his health before a hundred of the best gentlemen of France;" and on finishing these words, the young man, perceiving that his enthusiasm had deranged one of his ruffles, set to work to put it to rights with the greatest care imaginable.

"Let us resume business, Sire," interrupted Mazarin, who never was enthusiastic and who wore no ruffles.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied Louis XIV. "Enter upon your communication, Monsieur the Count," added he, turning towards Athos.

Athos immediately began, and offered in due form the hand of the Princess Henrietta Stuart to the young prince, the king's brother. The conference lasted an hour; after which the doors of the chamber were thrown open to the courtiers, who resumed their places as if nothing had been kept from them in the occupations of that evening. Athos then found himself again with Raoul, and the father and son were able to clasp hands once more.

CHAPTER XLII.

IN WHICH MAZARIN BECOMES PRODIGAL.

While Mazarin was endeavoring to recover from the serious alarm he had just experienced, Athos and Raoul exchanged a few words in a corner of the chamber.

"Well, here you are in Paris, then, Raoul?" said the count.

"Yes, Monsieur, since the return of Monsieur the Prince."

"I cannot converse freely with you here, because we are observed; but I shall return home presently, and shall expect you as soon as your duty permits."

Raoul bowed; and at that moment Monsieur the Prince came up to them. The prince had that clear and keen look which distinguishes birds of prey of the noble species; his physiognomy itself presented several distinct traits of this resemblance. Of the Prince de Condé it is well known that his aquiline nose sprang, sharp and incisive, from a brow slightly retreating and not very high; and this, according to the railers of the court, — a pitiless race, even for genius, — constituted rather an eagle's beak than a human nose, for the heir of the illustrious princes of the house of Condé. This penetrating look, this imperious expression of the whole countenance, generally disturbed those to whom the prince spoke, more than either the majesty or the noble appearance of the conqueror of Rocroy could have done. Besides this, the fire mounted so suddenly to his pro-

jecting eyes, that with the prince every sort of animation resembled anger. Now, on account of his rank everybody at the court respected Monsieur the Prince; and many even, seeing only the man, carried their respect to the height of fear.

Louis de Condé, then, advanced towards the Comte de la Fère and Raoul, with the marked intention of being saluted by the one and of speaking to the other. No man bowed with more reserved grace than the Comte de la Fère. He disdained to put into a salutation all the shades which a courtier ordinarily borrows from the same color, — the desire to please. Athos knew his own personal value, and bowed to the prince as a man, — correcting by something sympathetic and indefinable that which might have appeared offensive to the pride of the highest rank in the inflexibility of his attitude. The prince was about to speak to Raoul. Athos prevented him.

"If M. le Vicomte de Bragelonne," said he, "were not one of the humble servants of your royal Highness, I would beg him to pronounce my name before you, my Prince."

"I have the honor to address M. le Comte de la Fère," said Condé, instantly.

"My protector," added Raoul, blushing.

"One of the most honorable men in the kingdom," continued the prince; "one of the first gentlemen of France, and of whom I have heard so much that is good that I have frequently desired to number him among my friends."

"An honor of which I should be unworthy," replied Athos, "but for the respect and admiration I entertain for your Highness."

"M. de Bragelonne," said the prince, "is a good officer, who it is plain has been to a good school. Ah, Monsieur the Count, in your time generals had soldiers!"

"That is true, Monseigneur; but nowadays soldiers have generals."

This compliment, which savored so little of flattery, gave a thrill of joy to a man whom already Europe considered a hero, and who might be thought to be satiated with praise.

"I very much regret," continued the prince, "that you should have retired from the service, Monsieur the Count; for it is more than probable that the king will soon have a war with Holland or England, and opportunities for distinguishing himself would not be wanting to a man who, like you, knows Great Britain as well as France."

"I believe I may say, Monseigneur, that I have acted wisely in retiring from the service," said Athos, smiling. "France and Great Britain will henceforward live like two sisters, if I can trust my presentiments."

"Your presentiments?"

"Stop, Monseigneur! listen to what is said yonder, at the table of Monsieur the Cardinal."

"Where they are playing?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

The cardinal had just raised himself upon one elbow, and made a sign to the king's brother, who went to him. "Monseigneur," said the cardinal, "pick up, if you please, all those gold crowns;" and he pointed to the enormous pile of yellow and glittering pieces which the Comte de Guiche had gradually accumulated by a surprising run of luck at play.

"For me?" cried the Duc d'Anjou.

"Those fifty thousand crowns; yes, Monseigneur, they are yours."

"Do you give them to me?"

"I have been playing on your account, Monseigneur," replied the cardinal, getting weaker and weaker, as if this

effort of giving money had exhausted all his physical and moral faculties.

"Oh, good heavens!" exclaimed Philip, wild with joy; "what a fortunate day!" and he himself, making a rake of his fingers, drew a part of the sum into his pockets, which he filled, and still full a third remained on the table.

"Chevalier," said Philip to his favorite, the Chevalier de Lorraine, "come hither, Chevalier." The favorite quickly obeyed. "Pocket the rest," said the young prince.

This singular scene was regarded by those present as only an exhibition of family feeling. The cardinal assumed the airs of a father with the sons of France, and the two young princes had grown up under his wing. No one then imputed this liberality on the part of the first minister to pride, or even impertinence, as we should nowadays. The courtiers contented themselves with envying the prince. The king turned away his head.

"I never had so much money before," said the young prince, joyously, as he crossed the chamber with his favorite, to go to his carriage. "No, never! How heavy they are, — a hundred and fifty thousand livres!"

"But why has Monsieur the Cardinal given all that money at once?" asked Monsieur the Prince of the Comte de la Fère. "He must be very ill, the dear cardinal!"

"Yes, Monseigneur, very ill, without doubt; and besides, he looks very ill, as your Highness may perceive."

"Assuredly! but he will die of it. A hundred and fifty thousand livres! Oh, it is incredible! But why, Count? Tell me a reason for it."

"Patience, Monseigneur, I beg of you. Here comes

M. le Duc d'Anjou, talking with the Chevalier de Lorraine; I should not be surprised if they spared us the trouble of being indiscreet. Listen to them."

In fact, the chevalier said to the prince in a low voice: "Monseigneur, it is not natural for M. Mazarin to give you so much money. Take care! you will let some of the pieces fall, Monseigneur. What design has the cardinal upon you, to make him so generous?"

"As I said," whispered Athos in the prince's ear, "now, perhaps, we shall have a reply to your question."

"Tell me, Monseigneur," repeated the chevalier, impatiently, while he estimated, by weighing it in his pocket, the quota of the gift which had glanced his way.

"My dear chevalier, a nuptial present."

"What! a nuptial present!"

"Eh! yes, I am going to be married!" replied the Duc d'Anjou, without perceiving, at the moment he was passing, the prince and Athos, who both bowed respectfully.

The chevalier darted at the young duke a glance so strange and so malicious that the Comte de la Fère was startled by it. "You! you to be married!" repeated he; "oh, that's impossible! You would not commit such a folly!"

"Bah! I don't do it myself; I am made to do it," replied the Duc d'Anjou. "But come quick! let us get rid of our money." Thereupon he disappeared with his companion, laughing and talking, while all heads bowed as he went by.

"Then," whispered the prince to Athos, "that is the secret."

"It was not I that told you so, Monseigneur."

"He is to marry the sister of Charles II.?"

"I believe so."

The prince reflected for a moment, and his eye shot forth a vivid flash. "Humph!" said he slowly, as if speaking to himself; "once more our swords are to be hung on the wall — for a long time!" and he sighed.

All which that sigh contained of ambition silently stifled, of illusions extinguished and hopes disappointed, Athos alone divined, for he alone had heard it. Immediately after, the prince took leave and the king departed. Athos, by a sign made to Bragelonne, renewed the desire he had expressed at the beginning of the scene. By degrees the chamber was deserted, and Mazarin was left alone, a prey to sufferings which he could no longer conceal. "Bernouin! Bernouin!" cried he, in a broken voice.

"What does Monseigneur want?"

"Guénaud, — let Guénaud be sent for," said his Eminence. "I think I am dying."

Bernouin, in great terror, rushed into the cabinet to give the order; and the courier, who hastened to fetch the physician, passed the king's carriage in the Rue St. Honoré.

CHAPTER XLIII.

GUÉNAUD.

The order of the cardinal was pressing; Guénaud quickly obeyed it. He found his patient stretched upon his bed, his legs swelled, livid, and his stomach collapsed. Mazarin had just undergone a severe attack of gout. He suffered cruelly, and with the impatience of a man who has not been accustomed to resistance. On the arrival of Guénaud, "Ah!" said he, "now I am saved!"

Guénaud was a very learned and circumspect man, who did not need the censure of Boileau to obtain a reputation. When in face of a disease, if it were personified in a king, he treated the patient as a Turk or a Moor. He did not therefore reply to Mazarin as the minister expected: "Here is the doctor; good-by, disease." On the contrary, on examining his patient with a very serious air, "Oh! oh!" said he.

"Eh? what? Guénaud! How you look!"

"I look as I ought to do on seeing your complaint, Monseigneur; it is a very dangerous one."

"The gout — oh, yes, the gout."

"With complications, Monseigneur."

Mazarin raised himself upon his elbow, and, questioning by look and gesture: "What do you mean by that? Am I worse than I think?"

"Monseigneur," said Guénaud, seating himself by the bed, "your Eminence has worked very hard during your life; your Eminence has suffered much."

"But I am not so very old, I fancy. The late M. de Richelieu was but seventeen months younger than I am, when he died — and died of a mortal disease. I am young, Guénaud; remember that I am scarcely fifty-two."

"Oh, Monseigneur, you are much more than that! How long did the Fronde last?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"For a medical calculation, Monseigneur."

"Well, some ten years — off and on."

"Very well; be kind enough to reckon every year of the Fronde as three years, — that makes thirty; now twenty and fifty-two make seventy-two years. You are seventy-two, Monseigneur! and that is a great age."

While saying this, he felt the pulse of his patient. It exhibited indications so fatal that the physician continued, notwithstanding the interruptions of the patient: "Put down the years of the Fronde at four each; you have lived eighty-two years."

"Are you speaking seriously, Guénaud?"

"Alas! yes, Monseigneur."

"You announce to me, then, in this roundabout way, that I am very ill?"

"My faith! yes, Monseigneur; and with a man of the mind and courage of your Eminence, it ought not to be necessary to speak indirectly."

The cardinal breathed with such difficulty that he inspired pity even in a pitiless physician. "There are diseases and diseases," resumed Mazarin; "from some of them people escape."

"That is true, Monseigneur."

"Is it not?" cried Mazarin, almost joyously; "for, in short, of what use would power be, and strength, and will? Of what use would genius be, — your genius, Guénaud?

Of what use would science and art be, if the patient, who controls all that, cannot be saved from peril?"

Guénaud was about to open his mouth, but Mazarin continued.

"Remember," said he, "I am the most confiding of your patients; remember that I obey you blindly, and that consequently —"

"I know all that," said Guénaud.

"I shall be cured, then?"

"Monseigneur, there is neither strength of will, nor power, nor genius, nor science that can overcome disease, which God doubtless sends, or which he cast upon the earth at the creation, with full power to destroy and kill mankind. When the disease is mortal, it kills, and nothing can —"

"Is — my disease — mortal?" asked Mazarin.

"Yes, Monseigneur."

His Eminence sank down for a moment, like an unfortunate wretch who is crushed by a falling column. But the spirit of Mazarin was strong, or rather his mind was firm. "Guénaud," said he, recovering from the first shock, "you will permit me to appeal from your judgment. I will call together the most learned men of Europe; I will consult them. I will live, in short, by the power of some remedy, I care not what."

"Monseigneur must not suppose," said Guénaud, "that I have the presumption to pronounce alone upon an existence so valuable as his. I have already assembled all the good physicians and practitioners of France and Europe. There were twelve of them."

"And they have said —"

"They have said that your Eminence is attacked with a mortal disease; I have the consultation signed in my portfolio. If your Eminence will please to see it, you

will find the names of all the incurable diseases we have met with. There is, first — "

"No, no!" cried Mazarin, pushing away the paper. "No, no, Guénaud, I yield! I yield!" and a profound silence, during which the cardinal resumed his senses and recovered his strength, succeeded to the agitation of this scene. "There is another thing," murmured Mazarin, "there are empirics and charlatans. In my country, those whom physicians abandon run the chance of a vender of orvietan, which ten times kills them, but a hundred times saves them."

"Has not your Eminence observed that during the last month I have altered my remedies ten times?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I have spent fifty thousand livres in purchasing the secrets of all these fellows; the list is exhausted, and so is my purse. You are not cured; and but for my art you would be dead."

"That ends it!" murmured the cardinal; "that ends it;" and he threw a melancholy look upon the riches which surrounded him. "And must I quit all that?" sighed he. "I am dying, Guénaud! I am dying!"

"Oh, not yet, Monseigneur!" said the physician.

Mazarin seized his hand. "In how long a time?" asked he, fixing his large eyes upon the impassive countenance of the physician.

"Monseigneur, we never tell that."

"To ordinary men, perhaps not; but to me, — to me, whose every minute is worth a treasure. Tell me, Guénaud, tell me!"

"No, no, Monseigneur."

"I insist upon it, I tell you! Oh, give me a month, and for every one of those thirty days I will pay you a hundred thousand livres!"

"Monseigneur," replied Guénaud, in a firm voice, "it is God who can give you days of grace, and not I. God allows you only fifteen days."

The cardinal breathed a painful sigh, and sank back upon his pillow, murmuring, "Thank you, Guénaud, thank you!"

The physician was about to depart; the dying man raising himself up, "Keep it secret," said he, with eyes of flame, "keep it secret!"

"Monseigneur, I have known this secret two months; you see that I have kept it faithfully."

"Go, Guénaud, — I will take care of your fortunes, — go, and tell Brienne to send me a clerk; have them call M. Colbert. Go!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

COLBERT.

COLBERT was not far off. During the whole evening he had remained in one of the corridors, chatting with Bernouin and Brienne, and commenting, with the ordinary skill of people of a court, upon the views which developed themselves, like air-bubbles upon the water, on the surface of each event. It is doubtless time to trace, in a few words, one of the most interesting portraits of the age; and we shall trace it with as much truth, perhaps, as contemporary painters have been able to do.

Colbert was a man in whom the historian and the moralist have an equal interest. He was thirteen years older than Louis XIV., his future master. Of middle height, rather thin than otherwise, he had deep-set eyes, a mean appearance, coarse black and thin hair, — which, say the biographers of his time, made him take early to the skull-cap. A look full of severity, of harshness even, a sort of stiffness, — which with inferiors was pride, with superiors an affectation of virtuous dignity, — a surly cast of countenance upon all occasions, even when looking at himself in a glass alone; so much for the exterior of this personage. As to the moral part of his character, the depth of his talent for accounts, and his ingenuity in making sterility itself productive were much boasted of.

Colbert had formed the idea of forcing governors of frontier places to feed the garrisons without pay, by levying contributions. Such a valuable quality made

Mazarin think of replacing Joubert, his intendant, who had recently died, by M. Colbert, who had such skill in nibbling down allowances. Colbert by degrees crept into the court, notwithstanding the meanness of his birth; for he was the son of a man who sold wine, as his father had done, but who afterwards sold cloth, and then silk stuffs. Colbert, destined for trade, had been a clerk to a merchant at Lyons, whom he had quitted to come to Paris in the office of a châtelet procurator named Biterne. It was here he had learned the art of drawing up an account, and the much more valuable one of complicating it. That stiffness of Colbert's had been of great benefit to him; so true is it that fortune, when she has a caprice, resembles those women of antiquity, whose fancy nothing physical or moral, in either things or men, could repel. Colbert, placed with Michel Letellier, Secretary of State in 1648, by his cousin Colbert, Seigneur de St. Pouange, who favored him, received one day from the minister a commission for Cardinal Mazarin. His Eminence was then in the enjoyment of flourishing health, and the bad years of the Fronde had not yet counted triple and quadruple for him. He was, at Sedan, very much annoyed at a court intrigue in which Anne of Austria appeared to wish to desert his cause. Of this intrigue Letellier held the thread. He had just received a letter from Anne of Austria, — a letter very valuable to him, and strongly compromising Mazarin; but as he already played the double part which served him so well, and by which he always managed two enemies so as to draw advantage from both, either by embroiling them more and more or by reconciling them, Michel Letellier wished to send Anne of Austria's letter to Mazarin, in order that he might take notice of him and be grateful for a service so handsomely rendered. To send the letter was an easy matter; to

recover it again, after having communicated it, that was the difficulty. Letellier cast his eyes around him, and seeing the black and meagre clerk scribbling away with his scowling brow, in his office, preferred him to the best gendarme for the execution of this design.

Colbert was commanded to set out for Sedan, with positive orders to carry the letter to Mazarin and bring it back to Letellier. He listened to his orders with scrupulous attention; required them to be repeated to him twice, and was particular in learning whether the bringing back was as necessary as the communicating; and Letellier said to him, "More necessary." Then he set out, travelled like a courier, without any care for his body, and placed in the hands of Mazarin, first a letter from Letellier, which announced to the cardinal the sending of the precious letter, and then that letter itself. Mazarin colored greatly while reading Anne of Austria's letter, gave Colbert a gracious smile, and dismissed him.

"When shall I have the answer, Monseigneur?" said the courier, humbly.

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow morning?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

The clerk turned upon his heel, after making his very best bow. The next day he was at his post at seven o'clock. Mazarin made him wait till ten. He remained patiently in the antechamber; his turn having come, he entered. Mazarin gave him a sealed packet. Upon the envelope of this packet were these words: "À M. Michel Letellier," etc. Colbert looked at the packet with much attention; the cardinal put on a pleasant countenance, and pushed him towards the door.

"And the letter of the queen-mother, Monseigneur?" asked Colbert.

"It is with the rest in the packet," said Mazarin.

"Oh, very well!" replied Colbert; and placing his hat between his knees, he began to unseal the packet.

Mazarin uttered a cry. "What are you doing?" said he, angrily.

"I am unsealing the packet, Monseigneur."

"You mistrust me, then, master pedant, do you? Did any one ever see such impertinence?"

"Oh, Monseigneur, do not be angry with me! It is certainly not your Eminence's word I place in doubt, God forbid!"

"What then?"

"It is the carefulness of your officials, Monseigneur. What is a letter? A rag. May not a rag be forgotten? And, look, Monseigneur, see if I was not right. Your clerks have forgotten the rag; the letter is not in the packet."

"You are an insolent fellow, and you have not looked," cried Mazarin, angrily; "begone and wait my pleasure!" While saying these words, with a subtlety quite Italian, he snatched the packet from the hands of Colbert, and re-entered his apartments.

But this anger could not last so long as not to give way in time to reason. Mazarin, every morning, on opening the door of his cabinet, found the figure of Colbert standing like a sentinel at his post; and this disagreeable figure never failed to ask him humbly, but with insistence, for the queen-mother's letter. Mazarin could hold out no longer, and was obliged to surrender the letter. He accompanied this restitution with a most severe reprimand, during which Colbert contented himself with examining, feeling, even smelling, as it were, the papers, the characters, and the signature, neither more nor less than if he had had to do with the greatest forger in the king-

dom. Mazarin behaved more rudely still to him; but Colbert, still impassive, having assured himself that the letter was the true one, went off as if he had been deaf. This conduct afterwards was worth the post of Joubert to him; for Mazarin, instead of bearing malice, admired him, and was desirous of attaching so much fidelity to himself.

It may be judged, by this single anecdote, what the character of Colbert was. Events, gradually developing themselves, brought all the resources of his mind into action. Colbert was not long in insinuating himself into the good graces of the cardinal; he became even indispensable to Mazarin. The clerk was acquainted with all the cardinal's accounts, without his Eminence ever having spoken to him about them. This secret between them was a powerful tie; and it was for this reason that when about to appear before the Master of another world, Mazarin was desirous of taking Colbert's advice in disposing of the wealth he was so unwillingly obliged to leave in this world. After the visit of Guénaud, he therefore sent for Colbert, desired him to sit down, and said to him, "Let us converse, M. Colbert, and seriously; for I am very sick, and I may chance to die."

"Man is mortal," replied Colbert.

"I have always remembered that, M. Colbert, and I have worked with that in mind. You know that I have amassed a little wealth."

"I know you have, Monseigneur."

"At how much do you estimate, approximately, the amount of this wealth, M. Colbert?"

"At forty million five hundred and sixty thousand two hundred livres nine sous eight deniers," replied Colbert.

The cardinal fetched a deep sigh, and looked at Col-

bert with wonder; but he allowed a smile to steal across his lips.

"Property known," added Colbert, in reply to that smile.

The cardinal made quite a start in his bed. "What do you mean by that?" said he.

"I mean," said Colbert, "that besides those forty million five hundred and sixty thousand two hundred livres nine sous eight deniers, there are thirteen millions that are not known."

"*Ouf!*" sighed Mazarin, "what a man!"

At this moment the head of Bernouin appeared through the opening of the door.

"What is it?" asked Mazarin; "and why do you disturb me?"

"The Théatin father, your Eminence's director, was sent for this evening; and he cannot come again to Monseigneur till after to-morrow."

Mazarin looked at Colbert, who arose and took his hat, saying, "I will come again, Monseigneur."

Mazarin hesitated. "No, no," said he; "I have as much business to transact with you as with him. Besides, you are my other confessor; and what I have to say to one, the other may hear. Remain where you are, Colbert."

"But, Monseigneur, if there be a secret of penitence, will the director consent to my being here?"

"Do not trouble yourself about that; come into the recess."

"I can wait outside, Monseigneur."

"No, no; it will do you good to hear the confession of a rich man."

Colbert bowed, and went into the recess.

"Introduce the Théatin father," said Mazarin, closing the curtains.

CHAPTER XLV.

CONFESSION OF A MAN OF WEALTH.

THE Théatin entered deliberately, without being too much astonished at the noise and agitation which anxiety for the health of the cardinal had raised in his household.

"Come in, my reverend father," said Mazarin, after a last look at the recess, — "come in, and console me."

"That is my duty, Monseigneur," replied the Théatin.

"Begin by sitting down and making yourself comfortable, for I am going to make a general confession; you will afterwards give me a good absolution, and I shall be more tranquil."

"Monseigneur," said the father, "you are not so ill as to make a general confession urgent, and it will be very fatiguing; take care!"

"You suspect, then, that it may be long, Father?"

"How can I think it otherwise, when a man has lived so completely as your Eminence has done?"

"Ah! that is true. Yes, the recital may be long."

"The mercy of God is great!" snuffled the Théatin.

"Stop!" said Mazarin; "there I begin to terrify myself with having allowed so many things to pass which the Lord might reprove."

"Is not that always so?" said the Théatin, naively, removing farther from the lamp his thin pointed face, like that of a mole. "Sinners are so: forgetful beforehand, and scrupulous when it is too late."

"Sinners [*pêcheurs*]?" replied Mazarin. "Do you use that word ironically, and to reproach me with all the genealogies I have allowed to be made on my account, — I, the son of a fisherman [*pêcheur*], in fact?"

"Humph!" said the Théatin.

"That is a first sin, Father; for I have allowed myself to be made to be descended from ancient Roman consuls, T. Geganius Macerinus I., Macerinus II., and Proculus Macerinus III., of whom the Chronicle of Haolander speaks. Between 'Macerinus' and 'Mazarin' was a tempting similarity. 'Macerinus,' a diminutive, means *leanish, poorish, out of case.* Oh, reverend father! 'Mazarini' may now well mean, in the augmentative, *thin as Lazarus.* Look!" and he showed his fleshless arms and his legs wasted by fever.

"In your having been born of a family of fishermen I see nothing blameworthy in you, — for Saint Peter was a fisherman; and if you are a prince of the Church, Monseigneur, he was the supreme head of it. Pass on, if you please."

"The more readily because I threatened with the Bastille a certain Bounet, a priest of Avignon, who wanted to publish a genealogy of the Casa Mazarini much too marvellous."

"To be probable?" replied the Théatin.

"Oh, if I had acted up to his idea, Father, that would have been the vice of pride, — another sin."

"It was excess of invention; and a person is not to be reproached with abuses of that kind. Pass on, pass on!"

"I was all pride. Look you, Father, I will endeavor to divide that into capital sins."

"I like divisions, when well made."

"I am glad of that. You must know that in 1630 — alas! that is thirty-one years ago."

"You were then twenty-nine years old, Monseigneur."

"A hot-headed age. I was then something of a soldier, and I threw myself at Casal into the arquebusades, to show that I rode on horseback as well as an officer. It is true I restored peace between the French and the Spaniards; that redeems my sin a little."

"I see no sin in being able to ride well on horseback," said the Théatin; "that is in perfect good taste, and does honor to our gown. As a Christian, I approve of your having prevented the effusion of blood; as a monk, I am proud of the bravery a colleague has exhibited."

Mazarin bowed his head humbly. "Yes," said he; "but the consequences?"

"What consequences?"

"Eh! that damned sin of pride has roots without end. From the time when I threw myself in that manner between two armies, since I have smelt powder and faced lines of soldiers, I have held generals a little in contempt."

"Ah!" said the father.

"There is the evil, — so that since that time I have not found one among them that was endurable."

"The fact is," said the Théatin, "that the generals we have had have not been remarkable."

"Oh!" cried Mazarin, "there was Monsieur the Prince. I have tormented him thoroughly."

"He is not much to be pitied; he has acquired sufficient glory and sufficient wealth."

"That may be, for Monsieur the Prince; but M. de Beaufort, for example, — whom I made suffer so long in the dungeons of Vincennes?"

"Ah! but he was a rebel; and the safety of the State required that you should make a sacrifice. Pass on!"

"I believe I have exhausted pride. There is another sin which I am afraid to qualify."

"I will qualify it myself. Tell it."

"A great sin, reverend father!"

"We shall judge, Monseigneur."

"You cannot fail to have heard of certain relations which I have had — with her Majesty the queen-mother. The malevolent — "

"The malevolent, Monseigneur, are fools; was it not necessary, for the good of the State and the interests of the young king, that you should live in good intelligence with the queen? Pass on, pass on!"

"I assure you," said Mazarin, "you remove a terrible weight from my breast."

"These are all trifles! Look for something serious."

"I have had much ambition, Father."

"That is the march of great things, Monseigneur."

"Even that trifle of the tiara?"

"To be Pope is to be the first of Christians. Why should you not desire that?"

"It has been printed that, to gain that object, I sold Cambrai to the Spaniards."

"You have, perhaps, yourself written pamphlets without too much persecuting pamphleteers."

"Then, reverend father, I have truly a clean breast. I feel nothing remaining but slight peccadilloes."

"What are they?"

"Play."

"That is rather mundane; but you were obliged by the duties of greatness to keep a good house."

"I like to win."

"No player plays to lose."

"I cheated a little."

"You took your advantage. Pass on."

"Well, reverend father, I feel nothing else upon my conscience. Give me absolution, and my soul will be able, when God shall please to call it, to mount without obstacle even to his throne —"

The Théatin moved neither his arms nor his lips.

"What are you waiting for, Father?" said Mazarin.

"I am waiting for the end."

"The end of what?"

"Of the confession, Monseigneur."

"But I have ended."

"Oh, no; your Eminence is mistaken."

"Not that I know of."

"Search diligently."

"I have searched as well as possible."

"Then I will assist your memory."

"Do."

The Théatin coughed several times. "You have said nothing of avarice, another capital sin, nor of those millions," said he.

"Of what millions, Father?"

"Why, of those you possess, Monseigneur."

"Father, that money is mine; why should I speak to you about that?"

"Because, see you, our opinions differ. You say that money is yours; while I — I believe it belongs in some degree to others."

Mazarin lifted his cold hand to his brow, which was dewed with sweat. "How so?" stammered he.

"In this way. Your Eminence has gained much wealth — in the service of the king."

"Humph! much — it is not too much."

"Whatever it may be, whence came that wealth?"

"From the State."

"The State, — that is the king."

"But what do you conclude from that, Father?" said Mazarin, who began to tremble.

"I cannot conclude without seeing a list of the riches you possess. Let us reckon a little, if you please. You have the bishopric of Metz?"

"Yes."

"The abbeys of St. Clement, St. Arnoud, and St. Vincent, all at Metz?"

"Yes."

"You have the abbey of St. Denis, in France, — a magnificent property?"

"Yes, Father."

"You have the abbey of Cluny, which is rich?"

"I have."

"That of St. Médard, at Soissons, with a revenue of a hundred thousand livres?"

"I cannot deny it."

"That of St. Victor, at Marseilles, — one of the best in the South?"

"Yes, Father."

"A good million a year. With the emoluments of the cardinalship and the ministry, it is perhaps two millions a year."

"Eh!"

"In ten years that is twenty millions; and twenty millions placed out at fifty per cent give, by compounding, twenty additional millions in ten years."

"How well you reckon, for a Théatin!"

"Since your Eminence placed our order in the convent we occupy, near St. Germain des Prés, in 1641, I have kept the accounts of the society."

"And mine likewise, apparently, Father."

"One ought to know a little of everything, Monseigneur."

"Very well. Now conclude."

"I conclude that your baggage is too heavy to allow you to pass through the gates of Paradise."

"I shall be damned?"

"If you do not make restitution, yes."

Mazarin uttered a piteous cry. "Restitution! — but to whom, good God?"

"To the owner of that money, — to the king."

"But the king has given it all to me!"

"One moment, — the king does not sign the treasury orders."

Mazarin passed from sighs to groans. "Absolution! absolution!" cried he.

"Impossible, Monseigneur. Restitution! restitution!" replied the Théatin.

"But you absolve me from all other sins; why not from that?"

"Because," replied the father, "to absolve you on that count would be a sin for which the king would never absolve me, Monseigneur."

Thereupon the confessor quitted his penitent with an air full of compunction. He then went out in the same manner as he had entered.

"Oh, good God!" groaned the cardinal. "Come here, Colbert! I am very, very ill indeed, my friend."

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE DONATION.

COLBERT reappeared beneath the curtains.

"Have you heard?" said Mazarin.

"Alas! yes, Monseigneur."

"Can he be right? Can all this money be badly acquired?"

"A Théatin, Monseigneur, is a bad judge in matters of finance," replied Colbert, coolly; "and yet it is very possible that, according to his theological ideas, your Eminence has been, in a certain degree, wrong. People generally find they have been so, — when they die."

"In the first place, they commit the wrong of dying, Colbert."

"That is true, Monseigneur. Against whom, however, did the Théatin make out that you had committed these wrongs? — against the king?"

Mazarin shrugged his shoulders. "As if I had not saved both his State and its finances!"

"That admits of no contradiction, Monseigneur."

"Does it not? Then I have received only a legitimate salary, notwithstanding the opinion of my confessor?"

"That is beyond doubt."

"And I might fairly keep for my own family, which is so needy, a good fortune, — the whole, even, of what I have gained?"

"I see no impediment to that, Monseigneur."

"I felt assured that in consulting you, Colbert, I should have sage advice," replied Mazarin, greatly delighted.

Colbert made a pedantic grimace. "Monseigneur," interrupted he, "I think it would be quite as well to examine whether what the Théatin said is not a snare."

"Oh, no! A snare? What for? The Théatin is an honest man."

"He believed your Eminence to be at the gates of the tomb, because your Eminence consulted him. Did not I hear him say, 'Distinguish that which the king has given you from that which you have given yourself'? Recollect, Monseigneur, if he did not say something a little like that to you. That is a speech quite in the Théatin style."

"That is possible."

"In which case, Monseigneur, I should consider you as required by the Théatin to —"

"To make restitution?" cried Mazarin, with great warmth.

"Eh! I do not say no."

"Restitution of all? You do not dream of such a thing! You speak like the confessor."

"To make restitution of a part, — that is to say, his Majesty's part; and that, Monseigneur, may have its dangers. Your Eminence is too skilful a politician not to know that at this moment the king does not possess a hundred and fifty thousand livres clear in his coffers."

"That is not my affair," said Mazarin, triumphantly; "that belongs to M. le Surintendant Fouquet, whose accounts for months past I have given you to verify."

Colbert bit his lips at the name of Fouquet. "His Majesty," said he, between his teeth, "has no money but that which M. Fouquet collects; your money, Monseigneur, would afford him a delicious banquet."

"Well, but I am not the intendant of his Majesty's finances; I have my own purse. Indeed, I would do much for his Majesty's welfare, — some legacy, — but I cannot disappoint my family."

"The legacy of a part would dishonor you and offend the king. Leaving a part to his Majesty is to avow that that part has inspired you with doubts as to its lawful acquisition."

"M. Colbert!"

"I thought your Eminence did me the honor to ask my advice?"

"Yes; but you are ignorant of the principal details of the question."

"I am ignorant of nothing, Monseigneur. During ten years all the columns of figures which are found in France have passed in review before me; and if I have painfully nailed them into my brain they are there now so well riveted, that, from the office of M. Letellier, who is moderate, to the little secret largesses of M. Fouquet, who is prodigal, I could recite, figure by figure, all the money that is spent in France, from Marseilles to Cherbourg."

"Then you would have me throw all my money into the coffers of the king?" cried Mazarin, ironically, from whom at the same time the gout forced painful moans. "Certainly the king would reproach me with nothing; but he would laugh at me while absorbing my millions, and with reason."

"Your Eminence has misunderstood me. I did not, the least in the world, pretend that his Majesty ought to spend your money."

"You said so clearly, it seems to me, when you advised me to give it to him."

"Ah!" replied Colbert, "that is because your Emi-

nence, absorbed as you are by your disease, entirely loses sight of the character of Louis XIV."

"How so?"

"That character, if I may venture to express myself thus, resembles that which Monseigneur confessed just now to the Théatin."

"Go on! That is—"

"Pride!. Pardon me, Monseigneur; haughtiness I mean. Kings have no pride; that is a human passion."

"Pride, — yes, you are right. Next?"

"Well, Monseigneur, if I have divined rightly, your Eminence has but to give all your money to the king, and that immediately."

"But what for?" said Mazarin, quite bewildered.

"Because the king will not accept the whole."

"Oh! a young man who has no money, and is consumed by ambition!"

"Precisely."

"A young man who is anxious for my death—"

"Monseigneur!"

"To inherit, yes, Colbert, yes; he is anxious for my death in order to inherit. Triple fool that I am! I would prevent him!"

"Exactly; if the donation is made in a certain form, he will refuse it."

"Well; but how?"

"It is certain. A young man who has yet done nothing, who burns to distinguish himself, who burns to reign alone, will never take anything ready built; he will wish to construct for himself. This prince, Monseigneur, will never be content with the Palais-Royal, which M. de Richelieu left him; nor with the Palais-Mazarin, which you have caused to be so superbly constructed; nor with the Louvre, which his ancestors inhabited; nor with

St. Germain, where he was born. All that does not proceed from himself he will disdain. I predict it."

"And you will guarantee that if I give my forty millions to the king — "

"Saying certain things to him at the same time, I guarantee he will refuse them."

"But those things, — what are they?"

"I will write them, if Monseigneur is willing to employ me."

"Well; but, after all, what advantage will that be to me?"

"An enormous one. Nobody will afterwards be able to accuse your Eminence of that unjust avarice with which pamphleteers have reproached the most brilliant mind of the present age."

"You are right, Colbert, you are right; go and seek the king, on my part, and carry him my will."

"A donation, Monseigneur."

"But if he should accept it, — if he should accept it!"

"Then there would remain thirteen millions for your family; and that is a good round sum."

"But then you would be either a fool or a traitor."

"And I am neither the one nor the other, Monseigneur. You appear to be much afraid the king will accept; oh, fear rather that he will not accept!"

"But, see you, if he does not accept, I should like to guarantee my thirteen reserved millions to him, — yes, I will do so, — yes. But my pains are returning; I shall faint. I am very, very ill, Colbert; I am very near my end!"

Colbert started. The cardinal was indeed very ill; large drops of sweat flowed down upon his bed of agony, and the frightful paleness of a face streaming with water was a spectacle which the most hardened practitioner could not have beheld without compassion. Colbert was, without doubt, very much affected; for he quitted the

chamber, calling Bernouin to attend the dying man, and went into the corridor. There, walking about with a meditative expression, which almost gave nobleness to his vulgar head, his shoulders thrown up, his neck stretched out, his lips half open, to give vent to unconnected fragments of incoherent thoughts, he lashed up his courage to the pitch of the undertaking contemplated; while within ten paces of him, separated only by a wall, his master was overcome by pain which drew from him lamentable cries, thinking no more of the treasures of the earth or of the joys of Paradise, but much of all the horrors of hell. While burning-hot napkins, topicals, revulsives, and Guénaud, who was recalled, were performing their functions with increased activity, Colbert, holding his great head in both his hands, to compress within it the fever of the projects engendered by the brain, was meditating the tenor of the donation he would make Mazarin write, at the first hour of respite his disease should afford him. It would appear as if all the cries of the cardinal, and all the attacks of death upon this representative of the past, were stimulants for the genius of this thinker with the bushy eyebrows, who was turning already towards the rising of the new sun of a regenerated society. Colbert resumed his place at Mazarin's pillow at the first interval of pain, and persuaded him to dictate a donation thus conceived: —

About to appear before God, the Master of mankind, I beg the king, who was my master on earth, to resume the wealth which his bounty has bestowed upon me, and which my family would be happy to see pass into such illustrious hands. The particulars of my property will be found — they are drawn up — at the first requisition of his Majesty, or at the last sigh of his most devoted servant.

JULES, *Cardinal de Mazarin.*

The cardinal sighed heavily as he signed this. Colbert sealed the packet, and carried it immediately to the Louvre, whither the king had returned. He then went back to his own home, rubbing his hands with the confidence of a workman who has done a good day's work.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HOW ANNE OF AUSTRIA GAVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO LOUIS XIV., AND HOW M. FOUQUET GAVE HIM ANOTHER.

THE news of the extremity into which the cardinal had fallen had already spread, and attracted at least as much attention among the people of the Louvre as the news of the marriage of Monsieur, the king's brother, which had already been announced as an official fact. Scarcely had Louis XIV. returned home, with his thoughts fully occupied with the various things he had seen and heard in the course of the evening, when an usher announced that the same crowd of courtiers who in the morning had thronged his *lever*, presented themselves again at his *coucher*, — a remarkable piece of respect which during the reign of the cardinal the court, not very discreet in its preferences, had accorded to the minister without caring about displeasing the king.

But the minister had had, as we have said, an alarming attack of gout, and the tide of flattery was mounting towards the throne. Courtiers have a marvellous instinct in scenting events beforehand: they possess a supreme science; they are diplomatists to throw light upon the unravelling of difficult circumstances, captains to divine the issue of battles, and physicians to cure the sick. Louis XIV., to whom his mother had taught this commonplace truth, among many others, understood at once that Monsieur the Cardinal must be very ill.

Scarcely had Anne of Austria conducted the young queen to her apartments and relieved her brows of the head-dress of ceremony, when she went to seek her son in his cabinet, where, alone, melancholy and depressed, he spent upon himself, as if to exercise his will, one of those terrible inward passions — kings' passions — which create events when they break out, and which with Louis XIV., thanks to his astonishing command over himself, became tempests so benign that his most violent, his unique passion, that which Saint-Simon mentions with astonishment, was that famous burst of anger which he exhibited fifty years later, on the occasion of a little concealment by the Duc du Maine, and which had for result a shower of blows inflicted with a cane upon the back of a poor valet who had stolen a biscuit. The young king then was, as we have seen, a prey to a double excitement; and he said to himself, as he looked in a glass: "O king! — king by name, and not in fact! — phantom, vain phantom as thou art! — inert statue, who hast no other power than that of inciting salutations from courtiers! — when wilt thou be able to raise thy velvet arm, or clench thy silken hand? When wilt thou be able to open, for any purpose but to sigh or smile, lips condemned to the motionless stupidity of the marbles of thy gallery?"

Then, passing his hand over his brow and feeling the want of air, he approached a window, whence he saw below some cavaliers talking together, and groups of the timidly curious. These cavaliers were a portion of the guard; the groups were of the people, — to whom a king is always a curious thing, as a rhinoceros, a crocodile, or a serpent is. He struck his brow with his open hand, crying: "King of France! what a title! People of France! what a heap of creatures! I have just returned to my Louvre; my horses, just unharnessed, are still smoking,

and I have created interest enough to induce scarcely twenty persons to look at me as I passed. Twenty! what do I say? — no; there were not twenty anxious to see the King of France. There are not even ten archers to guard my place of residence; archers, people, guards, all are at the Palais-Royal! My God! why? Have not I, the king, the right to ask you that?"

"Because," said a voice, replying to his, and which sounded from the other side of the door of the cabinet, — "because at the Palais-Royal there is all the gold, — that is to say, all the power of him who desires to reign."

Louis turned sharply round. The voice which had pronounced these words was that of Anne of Austria. The king started, and advanced towards his mother. "I hope," said he, "your Majesty has paid no attention to the vain declamations the idea of which the solitude and disgust familiar to kings may give to the happiest characters?"

"I paid attention to only one thing, my son, and that was that you were complaining."

"Who? I? Not at all," said Louis XIV.; "no, in truth, you mistake, Madame."

"What were you doing then, Sire?"

"I imagined I was under the ferule of my professor, and was developing a subject of amplification."

"My son," replied Anne of Austria, shaking her head, "you are wrong not to trust to my word; you are wrong not to grant me your confidence. A day will come, perhaps quickly, wherein you will have occasion to remember that axiom, 'Gold is universal power; and they alone are kings who are all powerful.'"

"Your intention," continued the king, "was not, however, to cast blame upon the rich of this age, was it?"

"No," said the queen, warmly; "no, Sire. They who

are rich in this age, under your reign, are rich because you have been willing they should be so; and I entertain for them neither malice nor envy. They have, without doubt, served your Majesty sufficiently well to deserve that your Majesty should permit them to reward themselves. That is what I mean to say by the words for which you reproach me."

"God forbid, Madame, that I should ever reproach my mother with anything!"

"Besides," continued Anne of Austria, "the Lord gives the goods of this world but for a season. The Lord, as correctives to honor and riches, has placed sufferings, sickness, and death; and no one," added she, with a melancholy smile, which proved that she applied the funereal precept to herself, — "no one can take his wealth or his greatness with him into the tomb. It thence results that the young gather the abundant harvest prepared for them by the old."

Louis listened with increased attention to the words which Anne of Austria pronounced with a view, no doubt, of consoling him. "Madame," said he looking earnestly at his mother, "one would almost say you had something else to announce to me."

"I have absolutely nothing, my son; only you cannot have failed to remark that Monsieur the Cardinal is very ill."

Louis looked at his mother, expecting some emotion in her voice, some sorrow in her countenance. The face of Anne of Austria was apparently a little changed, but that was from a pain of quite a personal character. Perhaps the alteration was caused by the cancer which had begun to consume her breast. "Yes, Madame," said the king; "yes, M. de Mazarin is very ill."

"And it would be a great loss to the kingdom if his

Eminence were to be called away by God. Is not that your opinion as well as mine, my son?" said the queen.

"Yes, Madame; yes, certainly, it would be a great loss for the kingdom," said Louis, coloring. "But the peril does not seem to me to be so great; besides, Monsieur the Cardinal is young yet." The king had scarcely ceased speaking when an usher lifted the tapestry, and stood with a paper in his hand, waiting for the king to interrogate him.

"What have you there?" asked the king.

"A message from M. de Mazarin," replied the usher.

"Give it to me," said the king; and he took the paper. But at the moment he was about to open it, there was a great noise in the gallery, the antechambers, and the court.

"Ah! ah!" said Louis XIV., who had no doubt what the triple noise meant; "what did I say? — there was but one king in France? I was mistaken; there are two."

As he spoke or thought thus, the door opened, and the superintendent of the finances, Fouquet, appeared before Louis XIV. It was he who made the noise in the gallery; it was his lackeys who made the noise in the antechambers; it was his horses that made the noise in the court. In addition to all this a loud murmur was heard along his course, which did not die away till some time after he had passed. It was this murmur which Louis XIV. so much regretted not hearing die away behind him, as he passed.

"He is not precisely a king, as you fancy," said Anne of Austria to her son. "He is only a man who is much too rich; that is all."

While saying these words, a bitter feeling gave to the words of the queen a most malicious expression; whereas the brow of the king, calm and self-possessed, on the contrary, was without the slightest wrinkle. He nodded,

therefore, familiarly to Fouquet, while he continued to unfold the paper given to him by the usher. Fouquet perceived this movement, and with a politeness at once easy and respectful, advanced towards Anne of Austria, so as to leave the king wholly at liberty. Louis had opened the paper, and yet he did not read it. He heard Fouquet making the most charming compliments to the queen upon her hand and arm. The frown of Anne of Austria relaxed a little; she even almost smiled. Fouquet perceived that the king, instead of reading, was attending to him; he turned half round, therefore, and thus, while continuing to be engaged with the queen, faced the king.

"You know, M. Fouquet," said Louis XIV., "how ill M. Mazarin is?"

"Yes, Sire, I know that," said Fouquet; "in fact, he is very ill. I was at my country-house of Vaux when the news reached me; and the affair seemed so pressing that I left at once."

"You left Vaux this evening, Monsieur?"

"An hour and a half ago; yes, your Majesty," said Fouquet, consulting a watch richly ornamented with diamonds.

"An hour and a half!" said the king, still able to restrain his anger, but not to conceal his astonishment.

"I understand you, Sire. Your Majesty doubts my word, and you have reason to do so; but I have really come so quickly, though it is wonderful. I have received from England three pairs of very fast horses, as I had been assured. They were placed at distances of four leagues apart, and I have tried them this evening. They really brought me from Vaux to the Louvre in an hour and a half; so your Majesty sees I have not been cheated."

The queen-mother smiled with secret envy. But Fouquet caught her evil thought. "Madame," he promptly

said, "such horses are made for kings, not for subjects; for kings ought never to yield to any one in anything."

The king looked up.

"And yet," interrupted Anne of Austria, "you are not a king, that I know of, M. Fouquet."

"And therefore, Madame, the horses only wait the orders of his Majesty to enter the royal stables; and if I allowed myself to try them, it was only out of the fear of offering to the king anything that was not positively wonderful."

The king became quite red.

"You know, M. Fouquet," said the queen, "that at the court of France it is not the custom for a subject to offer anything to his king."

Louis started.

"I hoped, Madame," said Fouquet, much agitated, "that my love for his Majesty, my incessant desire to please him, would serve as a counterpoise to that scruple of etiquette. It was not, besides, so much a present that I permitted myself to offer, as a tribute I paid."

"Thank you, M. Fouquet," said the king, politely; "and I am gratified by your intention, for I love good horses. But you know I am not very rich; you, who are my superintendent of finances, know it better than any one else. I am not able, then, however willing I may be, to purchase such a valuable set of horses."

Fouquet darted a look of haughtiness at the queen-mother, who appeared to triumph at the false position the minister had got into, and replied: "Luxury is the virtue of kings, Sire; it is luxury which makes them resemble God; it is by luxury they are more than other men. With luxury a king nourishes his subjects, and honors them. Under the mild heat of this luxury of kings springs the luxury of individuals, a source of riches for

the people. His Majesty, by accepting the gift of these six incomparable horses, would have piqued the self-love of the breeders of our country, — of Limousin, Perche, and Normandie, — and this emulation would have been beneficial to all. But the king is silent, and consequently I am condemned."

During this speech Louis was unconsciously folding and unfolding Mazarin's paper, upon which he had not cast his eyes. At length he glanced at it, and uttered a faint cry on reading the first line.

"What is the matter, my son?" asked the queen, anxiously, and going towards the king.

"From the cardinal," replied the king, continuing to read; "yes, yes, it is really from him."

"Is he worse, then?"

"Read!" said the king, passing the parchment to his mother, as if he thought that nothing less than reading would convince Anne of Austria of a thing so astonishing as was conveyed in that paper.

Anne of Austria read in her turn; and as she read, her eyes sparkled with a joy the more apparent for her useless endeavor to hide it, which attracted the attention of Fouquet. "Oh! a regularly drawn up deed of donation," said she.

"A donation?" repeated Fouquet.

"Yes," said the king, replying pointedly to the superintendent of finances, — "yes, at the point of death, Monsieur the Cardinal makes me a donation of all his wealth."

"Forty millions!" cried the queen. "Oh, my son, this is very noble on the part of Monsieur the Cardinal, and will silence all malicious rumors; forty millions scraped together slowly, coming back all in one heap to the royal treasury! It is the act of a faithful subject

and a good Christian." And having once more cast her eyes over the letter, she restored it to Louis XIV., whom the announcement of that enormous sum greatly excited.

Fouquet had taken some steps backward, and remained silent. The king looked at him, and held the paper out to him, in his turn. The superintendent only bestowed a haughty look of a second upon it; then bowing, "Yes, Sire," said he; "a donation, I see."

"You must reply to it, my son," said Anne of Austria; "you must reply to it, and that immediately."

"But how, Madame?"

"By a visit to the cardinal."

"Why, it is but an hour since I left his Eminence," said the king.

"Write, then, Sire."

"Write!" said the young king, with evident repugnance.

"Well," replied Anne of Austria, "it seems to me, my son, that a man who has just made such a present has a good right to expect to be thanked for it with some degree of promptitude." Then turning towards Fouquet, "Is not that likewise your opinion, Monsieur?"

"That the present is worth the trouble? Yes, Madame," said Fouquet, with a lofty air that did not escape the king.

"Accept, then, and thank him," insisted Anne of Austria.

"What says M. Fouquet?" asked Louis XIV.

"Does your Majesty wish to know my opinion?"

"Yes."

"Thank him, Sire—"

"Ah!" said the queen.

"But do not accept," continued Fouquet.

"And why not?" asked the queen.

"You have yourself said why, Madame," continued

Fouquet; "because kings ought not to and cannot receive presents from their subjects."

The king remained mute between these two so opposite opinions.

"But forty millions!" said Anne of Austria, in the same tone as that in which, at a later period, poor Marie Antoinette replied, "You will tell me so much!"

"I know," said Fouquet, laughing, "forty millions are a good round sum, — such a sum as could tempt even a royal conscience."

"But, Monsieur," said Anne of Austria, "instead of persuading the king not to receive this present, recall to his Majesty's mind — you, whose duty it is — that these forty millions are a fortune to him."

"It is precisely, Madame, because these forty millions would be a fortune that I will say to the king, 'Sire, if it be not decent for a king to accept from a subject six horses, worth twenty thousand livres, it would be disgraceful for him to owe a fortune to another subject, more or less scrupulous in the choice of the materials which contributed to the building up of that fortune."

"It ill becomes you, Monsieur, to give your king a lesson," said Anne of Austria; "rather procure him forty millions to replace those you make him lose."

"The king shall have them whenever he wishes," said the superintendent of the finances, bowing.

"Yes; by oppressing the people," said the queen.

"And were they not oppressed, Madame," replied Fouquet, "when they were made to sweat the forty millions given by this deed? Furthermore, his Majesty has asked my opinion, — I have given it; if his Majesty asks my concurrence, it will be the same."

"Nonsense! accept, my son, accept!" said Anne of Austria. "You are above reports and interpretations."

"Refuse, Sire!" said Fouquet. "As long as a king lives, he has no other measure but his conscience, no other judge but his own desires; but when dead, there is posterity, which applauds or accuses."

"Thank you, Mother," replied Louis, bowing respectfully to the queen. "Thank you, M. Fouquet," said he, dismissing the superintendent civilly.

"Do you accept?" asked Anne of Austria, once more.

"I will reflect," replied he, looking at Fouquet.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

AGONY.

THE day after the deed of donation had been sent to the king, the cardinal caused himself to be transported to Vincennes. The king and the court followed him thither. The last flashes of this torch still cast splendor enough around to absorb in its radiations all other lights. Besides, as has been seen, the faithful satellite of his minister, young Louis XIV., marched, even to the last minute, in accordance with his gravitation. The disease, as Guénaud had predicted, had gained the mastery; it was no longer an attack of gout, but of death. Then there was another thing which made that agony more agonizing still; and that was the agitation introduced into his mind by the donation he had sent to the king, and which, according to Colbert, the king ought to send back not accepted to the cardinal. The cardinal had, as we have seen, great faith in the predictions of his secretary; but the sum was a large one, and whatever might be the genius of Colbert, from time to time the cardinal thought to himself that the Théatin also might possibly have been mistaken, and that there was at least as much chance of his not being damned as there was that Louis XIV. would send him back his millions. Besides, the longer the donation was in coming back, the more Mazarin thought that forty millions were worth a little risk, particularly of so hypothetical a thing as the soul. Mazarin, in his character of cardinal and prime

minister, was almost an atheist, and quite a materialist. Every time that the door opened, he turned sharply round, expecting to see the return of his unfortunate donation; then, deceived in his hope, he lay down again with a sigh, and found his pains so much the greater for having forgotten them for an instant.

Anne of Austria had also followed the cardinal; her heart, though age had made it selfish, could not help evincing towards the dying man a sorrow which she owed him as a wife, according to some; and as a sovereign, according to others. She had, in some sort, put mourning in her countenance beforehand; and all the court wore it as she did.

Louis, in order not to show on his face what was passing at the bottom of his heart, persisted in remaining in his own apartments, where his nurse alone kept him company; the more he reckoned upon the approach of the time when all constraint would be at an end, the more humble and patient he was, falling back upon himself, as all strong men do when they form great designs, in order to gain more spring at the decisive moment.

Extreme unction had been administered secretly to the cardinal, who, faithful to his habits of dissimulation, struggled against appearances, and even against reality, receiving company while on his bed, as if afflicted with a merely temporary complaint. Guénaud, on his part, preserved profound secrecy; fatigued with visits and questions, he answered only, "His Eminence is still full of youth and strength, but God wills that which he wills; and when he has decided that man is to be laid low, he will be laid low." These words, which he scattered with a sort of discretion, reserve, and selection, were commented upon earnestly by two persons, — the king and the cardinal.

Mazarin, notwithstanding the prophecy of Guénaud, still deceived himself, or rather so well played his part that the most cunning, when saying he deceived himself, proved that they were his dupes.

Louis, absent from the cardinal two days, — Louis, with his eyes fixed upon that same donation which so constantly preoccupied the cardinal, — Louis did not exactly know how to interpret Mazarin's conduct. The son of Louis XIII., following the paternal traditions, had hitherto been so little of a king, that, while ardently desiring royalty, he desired it with that terror which always accompanies the unknown. Thus, having formed his resolution, which, besides, he communicated to nobody, he determined to have an interview with Mazarin. It was Anne of Austria, who, constant in her attendance upon the cardinal, first heard this proposition of the king, and who transmitted it to the dying man, whom it greatly agitated. For what purpose could Louis wish for an interview? Was it to return the deed, as Colbert had said he would? Was it to keep it after thanking him, as Mazarin thought he would? Nevertheless, as the dying man felt that the uncertainty increased his torments, he did not hesitate an instant.

"His Majesty will be welcome, — yes, very welcome," cried he, making Colbert, who was seated at the foot of the bed, a sign which the latter comprehended perfectly. "Madame," continued Mazarin, "will your Majesty be good enough to assure the king yourself of the truth of what I have just said?"

Anne of Austria rose; she herself was anxious to see a decision reached in regard to the forty millions which seemed to lie heavy on the mind of everybody. Anne of Austria went out. Mazarin made a great effort, and raising himself up towards Colbert, "Well, Colbert," said

he, "two days have passed away, — two mortal days, — and, you see, nothing has come back from yonder."

"Patience, Monseigneur!" said Colbert.

"Art thou mad, thou wretch? Thou advisest me to have patience! Oh, in sad truth, Colbert, thou art laughing at me. I am dying, and thou callest out to me to wait!"

"Monseigneur," said Colbert, with his habitual coolness, "it is impossible that things should not fall out as I have said. His Majesty is coming to see you; and, no doubt, he brings back the deed himself."

"Do you think so? Well, I, on the contrary, am sure that his Majesty is coming to thank me."

At this moment Anne of Austria returned. On her way to the apartments of her son, she had met in the antechambers a new empiric. There was a suggestion of a powder which, it was said, had power to save the cardinal; and she brought a portion of this powder with her. But this was not what Mazarin expected; therefore he would not even look at it, declaring that life was not worth the pains that were taken to preserve it. But while professing this philosophical axiom, his long-confined secret escaped him at last.

"That, Madame," said he, — "that is not the interesting part of my situation. I made the king, now two days ago, a little donation; up to this time, from delicacy no doubt, his Majesty has not condescended to say anything about it; but the time for explanation has come, and I implore your Majesty to tell me if the king has any ideas on the subject."

Anne of Austria was about to reply, when Mazarin stopped her.

"The truth, Madame," said he, — "in the name of Heaven, the truth! Do not flatter a dying man with

a hope that may prove vain!". There he stopped, a look from Colbert telling him that he was on a wrong tack.

"I know," said Anne of Austria, taking the cardinal's hand, — "I know that you have generously made, not a little donation, as you with so much modesty call it, but a magnificent gift. I know how painful it would be to you if the king — "

Mazarin listened, dying as he was, as ten living men could not have listened.

"If the king — " replied he.

"If the king," continued Anne of Austria, "should not freely accept what you offer so nobly."

Mazarin allowed himself to sink back upon his pillow like Pantaloon, — that is to say, with all the despair of a man who yields to the tempest; but he still preserved sufficient strength and presence of mind to cast upon Colbert one of those looks which are well worth ten sonnets, — that is to say, ten long poems.

"Should you not," added the queen, "have considered the refusal of the king as a sort of insult?"

Mazarin rolled his head about upon his pillow, without articulating a syllable. The queen was deceived, or feigned to be deceived, by this demonstration.

"Therefore," resumed she, "I have surrounded him with good counsels; and as certain minds, jealous, no doubt, of the glory you are about to acquire by this generosity, have endeavored to prove to the king that he ought not to accept this donation, I have struggled in your favor; and so well have I struggled, that you will not have, I hope, that annoyance to undergo."

"Ah!" murmured Mazarin, with languishing eyes, — "ah! that is a service I shall never forget for a single minute during the few hours I have to live."

"I must admit," continued the queen, "that it was not without trouble I rendered it to your Eminence."

"Ah, *peste!* I believe that. Oh! oh!"

"Good God! what is the matter?"

"I am burning!"

"Do you suffer much?"

"As much as one of the damned."

Colbert wished that he might sink through the flooring.

"So, then," resumed Mazarin, "your Majesty thinks that the king"—he stopped several seconds—"that the king is coming here to offer me a little turn of thanks?"

"I think so," said the queen.

Mazarin annihilated Colbert with his last look.

At that moment the ushers announced that the king was in the antechambers, which were filled with people. This announcement produced a stir, of which Colbert took advantage to escape by the door of the recess. Anne of Austria rose, and awaited her son, standing.

Louis XIV. appeared at the threshold of the door, with his eyes fixed upon the dying man, who did not even think it worth while to notice his Majesty, from whom he thought he had nothing more to expect. An usher placed a chair close to the bed. Louis bowed to his mother, then to the cardinal, and sat down. The queen took a seat in her turn. Then, as the king had looked behind him, the usher understood him, and made a sign to the courtiers who filled up the doorway to be gone, which they instantly obeyed.

Silence fell upon the chamber with the velvet curtains. The king, still very young, and very timid in the presence of him who had been his master from

his birth, still felt respect for Mazarin, particularly now, when touched with the supreme majesty of death. He did not dare, therefore, to begin the conversation, feeling that every word must have its bearing upon things not only of this world, but of the next.

As to the cardinal, at that moment he had but one thought, — his donation. It was not physical pain which gave him that air of despondency and that lugubrious look; it was the expectation of the thanks that were about to issue from the king's mouth, and cut off all hope of restitution.

Mazarin was the first to break the silence. "Has your Majesty come to make any stay at Vincennes?" said he.

Louis made an affirmative sign with his head.

"That is a gracious favor granted to a dying man," continued Mazarin, "and will render death milder to him."

"I hope," replied the king, "I have come to visit, not a dying man, but a sick man susceptible of cure."

Mazarin replied by a movement of the head which signified, "Your Majesty is very kind; but I know more than you on that subject." — "The last visit, Sire," said he; "the last visit."

"If it were so, Monsieur the Cardinal," said Louis, "I would come a last time to ask the counsels of a guide to whom I owe everything."

Anne of Austria was a woman; she could not restrain her tears. Louis showed himself much affected; and Mazarin still more than his two guests, but from very different motives.

Here the silence returned. The queen wiped her eyes, and the king regained his firmness.

"I was saying," continued the king, "that I owed much to your Eminence."

The eyes of the cardinal devoured the king, for he felt that the great moment had come. "And," continued Louis, "the principal object of my visit was to offer you very sincere thanks for the last evidence of friendship you have kindly sent me."

The cheeks of the cardinal sank in, his lips partially opened, and the most lamentable sigh he had ever uttered was about to issue from his chest.

"Sire," said he, "I may have despoiled my poor family, I may have ruined all that belong to me, — which may be imputed to me as an error; but at least it shall not be said of me that I have refused to sacrifice everything to my king."

Anne of Austria's tears flowed afresh.

"My dear M. de Mazarin," said the king, in a more serious tone than might have been expected from his youth, "you have misunderstood me, apparently." Mazarin raised himself upon his elbow. "I have no purpose to despoil your dear family, nor to ruin your servants. Oh, no, that shall never be!"

"Humph!" thought Mazarin, "he is going to restore me some bribe; let us get the largest piece out of the trap we can."

"The king is going to be foolishly affected, and play the generous," thought the queen. "He must not be allowed to impoverish himself; such an opportunity for gaining a fortune will never occur again."

"Sire," said the cardinal, aloud, "my family is very numerous, and my nieces will be destitute when I am gone."

"Oh!" interrupted the queen, eagerly, "have no uneasiness with respect to your family, dear M. de Mazarin!

We have no friends dearer than your friends. Your nieces shall be my children, the sisters of his Majesty; and if a favor be distributed in France, it shall be to those you love."

"Smoke!" thought Mazarin, who knew better than any one the faith that can be put in the promises of kings. Louis read the dying man's thought in his face.

"Be comforted, my dear M. de Mazarin!" said he, with a half-smile, sad under its irony. "The Mesdemoiselles de Mancini will lose, when losing you, their most precious good; but they shall none the less be the richest heiresses of France. And since you have been kind enough to give me their dowry," — the cardinal was panting, — "I restore it to them," continued Louis, drawing from his breast and holding towards the cardinal's bed the parchment which contained the donation that during two days had occasioned such tempests in the mind of Mazarin.

"What did I tell you, Monseigneur?" murmured in the recess a voice which passed away like a breath.

"Your Majesty returns me my donation!" cried Mazarin, so disturbed by joy as to forget his character of a benefactor.

"Your Majesty rejects the forty millions!" cried Anne of Austria, so stupefied as to forget her character of one in affliction.

"Yes, Monsieur the Cardinal; yes, Madame," replied Louis XIV., tearing the parchment which Mazarin had not yet ventured to clutch; "yes, I annihilate this deed which despoiled a whole family. The wealth acquired by his Eminence in my service is his own wealth, and not mine."

"But, Sire, does your Majesty reflect," said Anne of

Austria, "that you have not ten thousand crowns in your coffers?"

"Madame, I have just performed my first royal action, and I hope it will worthily inaugurate my reign."

"Ah, Sire, you are right!" cried Mazarin; "that is truly great, that is truly generous, which you have just done;" and he looked scrutinizingly at the various pieces of parchment spread over his bed, to assure himself that it was the original and not a copy that had been torn.

At length his eyes fell upon the fragment which bore his signature, and recognizing it, he sank back swooning on his bolster. Anne of Austria, without strength to conceal her regret, raised her hands and eyes towards heaven.

"Ah, Sire," cried Mazarin, "ah, Sire, be you blessed! My God! may you be beloved by all my family! *Per Baccho!* if ever any discontent comes to you from those belonging to me, Sire, only frown, and I will rise from my tomb!"

This bombast did not produce all the effect Mazarin had reckoned upon. Louis had already passed to considerations of a more elevated nature; and as to Anne of Austria, unable to support, without abandoning herself to the anger she felt burning within her, the magnanimity of her son and the hypocrisy of the cardinal, she arose and left the chamber, heedless of thus betraying the extent of her grief.

Mazarin saw all this, and fearing that Louis XIV. might repent of his decision, began, in order to draw attention another way, to cry out, — as at a later period Scapin was to cry out, in that sublime piece of pleasantry for which the morose and grumbling Boileau dared to reproach Molière. His cries, however, by degrees be-

came fainter; and when Anne of Austria left the apartment, they ceased altogether.

"Monsieur the Cardinal," said the king, "have you any recommendations to make to me?"

"Sire," replied Mazarin, "you are already wisdom itself, prudence personified. Of your generosity I will not venture to speak; that which you have just done exceeds all that the most generous men of antiquity or of modern times have ever done."

The king received this praise coldly.

"So you confine yourself, Monsieur," said he, "to your thanks; and your experience, much more extensive than my wisdom, my prudence, or my generosity, does not furnish me with a single piece of friendly advice to guide my future."

Mazarin reflected for a moment.

"You have just done much for me, Sire," said he, — "that is, for mine."

"Say no more about that," said the king.

"Well!" continued Mazarin, "I will return you something in exchange for these forty millions you have given up so royally."

Louis XIV., by a movement, indicated that these flatteries were unpleasing to him.

"I will give you a piece of advice," continued Mazarin; "yes, a piece of advice, — advice more precious than the forty millions."

"Monsieur the Cardinal!" interrupted Louis.

"Sire, listen to this advice."

"I am listening."

"Come nearer, Sire, for I am weak! — nearer, Sire, nearer!"

The king bent over the dying man. "Sire," said Mazarin, in so low a tone that the breath of his words

came only like a recommendation from the tomb to the attentive ears of the king, — "Sire, never have a prime minister."

Louis drew back astonished. The advice was a confession; a treasure, in fact, was that sincere confession of Mazarin.

The legacy of the cardinal to the young king was composed of six words only; but those six words, as Mazarin had said, were worth forty millions. Louis remained for an instant confounded. As for Mazarin, he appeared only to have said something quite natural.

"And now, on the part of your family," asked the young king, "have you any one to commend to me, M. de Mazarin?"

A little scratching was heard along the curtains of the recess. Mazarin understood.

"Yes, yes!" cried he, warmly; "yes, Sire, I recommend to you a wise man, an honest man, and a clever man."

"Tell me his name, Monsieur the Cardinal."

"His name is yet almost unknown, Sire; it is M. Colbert, my intendant."

"Oh, try him!" added Mazarin, in an earnest voice; "all that he has predicted has come to pass. He has a safe glance; he is never mistaken either in things or in men, — which is more surprising still. Sire, I owe you much, but I think I acquit myself of all towards you in giving you M. Colbert."

"So be it," said Louis, faintly; for as Mazarin had said, the name of Colbert was quite unknown to him, and he thought the enthusiasm of the cardinal partook of the delirium of a dying man. The cardinal sank back on his pillow.

"For the present, adieu, Sire, adieu!" murmured Mazarin. "I am tired, and I have yet a rough journey to perform before I present myself to my new master. Adieu, Sire!"

The young king felt the tears rise to his eyes; he bent over the dying man, already half dead, and then precipitately retired.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF COLBERT.

THE whole night was passed in anguish, common to the dying man and the king: the dying man expected his deliverance; the king expected his liberty. Louis did not go to bed. An hour after leaving the chamber of the cardinal, he learned that the dying man, recovering a little strength, had insisted upon being dressed and painted, and seeing the ambassadors. Like Augustus, he no doubt considered the world to be a great theatre, and was desirous of playing out properly the last act of the comedy. Anne of Austria reappeared no more in the cardinal's apartments; she had nothing more to do there. Propriety was the pretext for her absence. On his part, the cardinal did not ask for her; the advice the queen had given her son rankled in his heart. Towards midnight, while he was still painted, Mazarin's mortal agony came on. He had revised his will; and as this will was the exact expression of his wishes, and as he feared that some interested influence might take advantage of his weakness to make him change something in that testament, he had given the watchword to Colbert, who walked up and down the corridor which led to the

cardinal's bed-chamber, like the most vigilant of sentinels. The king, shut up in his own apartment, despatched his nurse every hour to Mazarin's chamber, with orders to bring him exact intelligence of the cardinal's state. After having heard that Mazarin was dressed, painted, and had seen the ambassadors, Louis heard that prayers for the dying were begun for the cardinal. At one o'clock in the morning, Guénaud had administered the last remedy, called the heroic remedy. It was a survival of the old customs of that fencing-time, which was about to disappear to give place to another time, to believe that death could be kept off by some good secret thrust. Mazarin, after having taken the remedy, respired freely for nearly ten minutes. He immediately gave orders that the news should be spread everywhere of a fortunate crisis. The king, on learning this, felt a cold sweat passing over his brow. He had had a glimpse of the light of liberty; slavery appeared to him darker and less acceptable than ever. But the bulletin which followed entirely changed the face of things. Mazarin could no longer breathe at all, and could scarcely follow the prayers which the curé of St. Nicholas-des-Champs recited near him. The king resumed his agitated walk about his chamber, and consulted, as he walked, several papers drawn from a casket of which he alone had the key. A third time the nurse returned. M. de Mazarin had just uttered a joke, and had ordered his "Flora," by Titian, to be revarnished. At length, towards two o'clock in the morning, the king could no longer resist his weariness; he had not slept for twenty-four hours. Sleep, so powerful at his age, overcame him for about an hour. But he did not go to bed for that hour; he slept in a chair. About four o'clock his nurse awoke him by entering the room.

"Well?" asked the king.

"Well, my dear Sire," said the nurse, clasping her hands with an air of commiseration; "well, he is dead!"

The king arose at a bound, as if a steel spring had been applied to his legs. "Dead!" cried he.

"Alas! yes."

"Is it quite certain?"

"Yes."

"Official?"

"Yes."

"Has the news of it been made public?"

"Not yet."

"Who told you, then, that the cardinal was dead?"

"M. Colbert."

"M. Colbert?"

"Yes."

"And was he sure of what he said?"

"He came out of the chamber, and had held a glass for some minutes before the cardinal's lips."

"Ah!" said the king. "And what has become of M. Colbert?"

"He has just left the chamber of his Eminence."

"To go whither?"

"To follow me."

"So that he is —"

"There, my dear Sire, waiting at your door till it shall be your good pleasure to receive him."

Louis ran to the door, opened it himself, and perceived in the passage Colbert standing waiting. The king started at the sight of this statue, all clothed in black. Colbert, bowing with profound respect, advanced two steps towards his Majesty. Louis re-entered his chamber, making Colbert a sign to follow him. Colbert en-

tered. Louis dismissed the nurse, who closed the door as she went out. Colbert remained modestly standing near the door.

"What do you come to announce to me, Monsieur?" said Louis, very much troubled at being thus surprised in his private thoughts, which he could not completely conceal.

"That the cardinal has just expired, Sire; and that I bring your Majesty his last adieu."

The king remained pensive for a minute; and during that minute he looked attentively at Colbert. It was evident that the cardinal's last words were in his mind. "Are you, then, M. Colbert?" asked he.

"Yes, Sire."

"The faithful servant of his Eminence, as his Eminence himself told me?"

"Yes, Sire."

"The depositary of part of his secrets?"

"Of all of them."

"The friends and servants of his deceased Eminence will be dear to me, Monsieur, and I shall take care that you are placed in my offices."

Colbert bowed.

"You are a financier, Monsieur, I believe?"

"Yes, Sire."

"And did Monsieur the Cardinal employ you in his stewardship?"

"He did me that honor, Sire."

"You never did anything personally for my household, I believe?"

"Pardon me, Sire; it was I who had the honor of giving Monsieur the Cardinal the idea of an economy which puts three hundred thousand francs a year into your Majesty's coffers."

"What economy was that, Monsieur?" asked Louis XIV.

"Your Majesty knows that the hundred Swiss have silver lace on each side of their ribbons?"

"Doubtless."

"Well, Sire, it was I who proposed that false silver lace should be placed upon these ribbons; it could not be seen; and a hundred thousand crowns serve to feed a regiment for six months, or is the price of ten thousand good muskets, or is the value of a vessel of ten guns, ready for sea."

"That is true," said Louis XIV., considering the personage more attentively, "and really there is an economy well placed; besides, it was ridiculous for soldiers to wear the same lace as noblemen wear."

"I am happy to be approved by your Majesty."

"Is that the only appointment you held about the cardinal?" asked the king.

"It was I whom his Eminence appointed to examine the accounts of the superintendent, Sire."

"Ah!" said Louis, who was about to dismiss Colbert, but was arrested by that word, — "ah! it was you whom his Eminence had charged to audit the accounts of M. Fouquet, was it? And the result of the examination?"

"Is that there is a deficit, Sire; but if your Majesty will permit me —"

"Speak, M. Colbert."

"I ought to give your Majesty some explanations."

"Not at all, Monsieur; it is you who have audited these accounts. Give me the result."

"That is very easily done, Sire: empty everywhere, money nowhere."

"Take care, Monsieur! You are rudely attacking the administration of M. Fouquet, who nevertheless, I have heard say, is an able man."

Colbert colored, and then became pale; for he felt from that minute he entered upon a struggle with a man whose power almost equalled the power of him who had just died. "Yes, Sire, a very able man," repeated Colbert, bowing.

"But if M. Fouquet is an able man, and, in spite of that ability, if money be wanting, whose fault is it?"

"I do not accuse, Sire; I verify."

"That is well; make out your accounts, and present them to me. There is a deficit, do you say? A deficit may be temporary; credit returns, and funds are restored."

"No, Sire."

"Not this year, perhaps, I understand that; but next year?"

"Next year is eaten as bare as the current year."

"But the year after, then?"

"Like next year."

"What is this you tell me, M. Colbert?"

"I say there are four years pledged in advance."

"We must have a loan, then."

"We must have three, Sire."

"I will create offices to make them resign, and the money of the posts shall be paid into the treasury."

"Impossible, Sire; for there have already been creations upon creations of offices, the provisions of which are given in blank, so that the purchasers enjoy them without filling them. That is why your Majesty cannot make them resign. Further, upon each agreement the superintendent has made an abatement of a third, so that the people have been oppressed without your Majesty profiting by it."

The king started. "Explain that to me, M. Colbert."

"Let your Majesty state clearly your thought, and tell me what you wish me to explain."

"You are right; clearness is what you wish, is it not?"

"Yes, Sire, clearness. God is God, above all things because He made light."

"Well, for example," resumed Louis XIV., "if to-day, the cardinal being dead and I being king, I wanted money?"

"Your Majesty would not have any."

"Oh, that is strange, Monsieur! How! my superintendent could not find me any money?"

Colbert shook his great head.

"How is that?" said the king; "are the revenues of the State so much in debt that there are no longer any revenues?"

"Yes, Sire, to that extent."

The king frowned. "If it be so," said he, "I will get together the orders and obtain from the holders a discharge, a liquidation, at a cheap rate."

"Impossible; for the orders have been converted into bills, which bills, for the convenience of return and facility of transaction, are divided into so many parts that the originals can no longer be recognized."

Louis, very much agitated, walked about, still frowning. "But if this were as you say, M. Colbert," said he, stopping all at once, "I should be ruined before I began to reign."

"You are, in fact, Sire," said the impassive accountant.

"Well, but yet, Monsieur, the money is somewhere?"

"Yes, Sire; and even as a beginning, I bring your Majesty a note of funds which M. le Cardinal Mazarin was not willing to set down in his will, or in any act whatever, but which he confided to me."

"To you?"

"Yes, Sire, with an injunction to remit it to your Majesty."

"What! besides the forty millions of the will?"

"Yes, Sire."

"M. de Mazarin had still other funds?"

Colbert bowed.

"Why, that man was a gulf!" murmured the king "M. de Mazarin on one side, M. Fouquet on the other, — more than a hundred millions, perhaps, between them! No wonder my coffers are empty!"

Colbert waited without stirring.

"And is the sum you bring me worth the trouble?" asked the king.

"Yes, Sire, it is a round sum."

"Amounting to how much?"

"To thirteen million livres, Sire."

"Thirteen millions!" cried Louis, trembling with joy, "do you say thirteen millions, M. Colbert?"

"I said thirteen millions; yes, your Majesty."

"Of which everybody is ignorant?"

"Of which everybody is ignorant."

"Which are in your hands?"

"In my hands; yes, Sire."

"And which I can have?"

"Within two hours."

"But where are they, then?"

"In the cellar of a house which the cardinal possessed in the city, and which he was so kind as to leave to me by a particular clause of his will."

"You are acquainted with the cardinal's will, then?"

"I have a duplicate of it, signed by his hand."

"A duplicate?"

"Yes, Sire; and here it is." Colbert quietly drew the deed from his pocket, and showed it to the king. The king read the article relative to the donation of the house.

"But," said he, "there is no mention here but of the house; there is nothing said of the money."

"Your pardon, Sire; it is in my conscience."

"And M. de Mazarin has intrusted it to you?"

"Why not, Sire?"

"He! a man mistrustful of everybody!"

"He was not so of me, Sire, as your Majesty may perceive."

Louis fixed his eyes with admiration upon that vulgar but expressive face. "You are an honest man, M. Colbert," said the king.

"That is not a virtue, Sire; it is a duty," replied Colbert, coolly.

"But," added Louis, "does not the money belong to the family?"

"If this money belonged to the family, it would be disposed of in the cardinal's will, as the rest of his fortune is. If this money belonged to the family, I, who drew up the deed of gift in favor of your Majesty, should have added the sum of thirteen millions to that of forty millions which was offered to you."

"How!" exclaimed Louis XIV., "was it you who drew up the deed of gift, M. Colbert?"

"Yes, Sire."

"And yet the cardinal loved you?" added the king, artlessly.

"I had assured his Eminence that your Majesty would by no means accept the gift," said Colbert, in that same quiet manner we have described, and which, even in the common habits of life, had something solemn in it.

Louis passed his hand over his brow. "Oh, how young I am," murmured he, "to have the command of men!"

Colbert awaited the end of this soliloquy. He saw

Louis raise his head. "At what hour shall I send the money to your Majesty?" asked he.

"To-night, at eleven o'clock; I desire that no one may know that I possess this money."

Colbert made no more reply than if the thing had not been said to him.

"Is the amount in ingots or coined gold?"

"In coined gold, Sire."

"That is well."

"Whither shall I send it?"

"To the Louvre. Thank you, M. Colbert."

Colbert bowed and retired. "Thirteen millions!" exclaimed Louis, as soon as he was alone. "This must be a dream!" Then he let his head sink between his hands, as if he were really asleep. But in a moment he raised his head, shook out his beautiful locks, rose, and opening the window violently, bathed his burning brow in the keen morning air, which brought to his senses the fresh scent of the trees and the perfume of flowers. A splendid dawn was rising in the horizon, and the first rays of the sun inundated with flame the brow of the young king. "This dawn is that of my reign," murmured Louis XIV. "Is it a presage that you send me, all-powerful God?"

CHAPTER L.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE ROYALTY OF LOUIS XIV.

In the morning the news of the death of the cardinal was spread through the castle, and thence speedily reached the city. The ministers Fouquet, Lyonne, and Letellier entered the deliberative chamber to hold a council. The king summoned them immediately. "Messieurs," said he, "as long as Monsieur the Cardinal lived, I allowed him to govern my affairs; but now I mean to govern them myself. You will give me your advice when I shall ask it. You may go."

The ministers looked at one another with surprise. If they concealed a smile, it was with a great effort; for they knew that the prince, brought up in absolute ignorance of business, by this act of pride took upon himself a burden much too heavy for his strength. Fouquet took leave of his colleagues upon the stairs, saying, "Messieurs! there will be so much the less labor for us;" and he gayly mounted into his carriage. The others, a little uneasy at the turn events had taken, went back to Paris together.

About ten o'clock the king repaired to the apartment of his mother, with whom he had a strictly private conversation. Then, after dinner, he got into his carriage and went straight to the Louvre. There he received much company, and took a degree of pleasure in noticing the general hesitation and curiosity. Towards evening he ordered the doors of the Louvre to be closed, with the

exception of one only, — that which opened upon the quay. He placed on duty at this point two hundred Swiss, who did not speak a word of French, with orders to admit all who carried packages, but no others; and by no means to allow any one to go out. At eleven o'clock precisely, he heard the rolling of a heavy carriage under the arch, then of another, then of a third; after which the door grated upon its hinges in closing. Soon after, somebody scratched at the door of the cabinet. The king opened it himself, and beheld Colbert, whose first word was this: "The money is in your Majesty's cellar."

The king then descended and went himself to see the barrels of specie, in gold and silver, which, under the direction of Colbert, four men had just rolled into a cellar of which the king had given Colbert the key the same morning. This review completed, Louis returned to his apartments, followed by Colbert, who had not warmed his immovable coldness with the slightest exhibition of personal gratification.

"Monsieur," said the king, "what do you wish me to give you as a recompense for this devotion and integrity?"

"Absolutely nothing, Sire."

"How! nothing? Not even an opportunity of serving me?"

"If your Majesty were not to furnish me with that opportunity, I should not the less serve you. It is impossible for me not to be the best servant of the king."

"You shall be intendant of the finances, M. Colbert."

"But there is already a superintendent, Sire."

"I know that."

"Sire, the superintendent of the finances is the most powerful man in the kingdom."

"Ah!" cried Louis, coloring, "do you think so?"

"He will crush me in a week, Sire. Your Majesty offers me a comptrollership for which strength is indispensable. An intendant under a superintendent, — that is inferiority."

"You want support, — you do not reckon upon me?"

"I had the honor of telling your Majesty that during the lifetime of M. de Mazarin, M. Fouquet was the second man in the kingdom; now that M. de Mazarin is dead, M. Fouquet is become the first."

"Monsieur, I permit you to tell me everything to-day, but to-morrow please to remember I shall no longer suffer it."

"Then I shall be useless to your Majesty?"

"You are already, since you fear to compromise yourself in serving me."

"I only fear to be placed so that I cannot serve you."

"What do you wish, then?"

"I wish your Majesty to grant me assistance in the labors of the office of intendant."

"The post would lose in value?"

"It would gain in security."

"Choose your colleagues."

"Messieurs Breteuil, Marin, Hervard."

"To-morrow the order shall appear."

"Sire, I thank you."

"Is that all you ask?"

"No, Sire; one thing more."

"What is that?"

"Allow me to form a chamber of justice."

"What would this chamber of justice do?"

"Try the farmers-general and contractors who during ten years have peculated."

"Well, but what would you do with them?"

"Hang two or three, and that would make the rest disgorge."

"I cannot begin my reign with executions, M. Colbert."

"Change your policy, Sire, in order not to end with persecution." The king made no reply. "Does your Majesty consent?" said Colbert.

"I will reflect upon it, Monsieur."

"It will be too late, when reflection may be made."

"Why?"

"Because we have to deal with people stronger than ourselves, if they are warned."

"Form that chamber of justice, Monsieur."

"I will, Sire."

"Is that all?"

"No, Sire; there is still an important affair. What rights does your Majesty attach to this office of intendant?"

"Well — I do not know — the customary ones."

"Sire, I require that to this office be devolved the right of reading the correspondence with England."

"Impossible, Monsieur; for that correspondence is kept from the council. The cardinal himself carried it on."

"I thought your Majesty had this morning declared that there should no longer be a council?"

"Yes, I said so."

"Let your Majesty then have the goodness to read all the letters yourself, particularly those from England; I hold strongly to this point."

"Monsieur, you shall have that correspondence, and render me an account of it."

"Now, Sire, what shall I do with respect to the finances?"

"All which M. Fouquet does not do."

"That is all I ask of your Majesty. Thanks, Sire, I depart at ease;" and with these words he did depart.

Louis watched him as he went. Colbert was not yet a hundred paces from the Louvre, when the king received a courier from England. After having looked at and examined the envelope, the king broke the seal hastily, and found a letter from Charles II. The following is what the English prince wrote to his royal brother: —

"Your Majesty must be rendered very uneasy by the illness of Cardinal Mazarin; but the excess of danger can only prove of service to you. The cardinal is given over by his physician. I thank you for the gracious reply you have made to my communication touching Lady Henrietta Stuart, my sister; and in a week the Princess and her court will set out for Paris. It is gratifying to me to acknowledge the fraternal friendship you have evinced towards me, and to call you, more justly than ever, my brother. It is gratifying to me, above everything, to prove to your Majesty how much I am interested in all that may please you. You are having Belle-Isle-en-Mer secretly fortified. That is wrong. We shall never be at war against each other. That measure does not make me uneasy; it makes me sad. You are spending useless millions there. Tell your ministers so; and be assured that I am well informed. Render me the same service, my brother, if occasion offers."

The king rang his bell violently, and his *valet de chambre* appeared. "M. Colbert has just gone; he cannot be far off. Let him be called back!" exclaimed he. The valet was about to execute the order, when the king stopped him. "No," said he, "no; I see the whole scheme of that man. Belle-Isle belongs to M. Fouquet; Belle-Isle is being fortified; that is a conspiracy of M. Fouquet's. The discovery of that conspiracy is the ruin of the superintendent, and that discovery is the result of the correspondence with England. That is why Colbert wished to have that correspondence. Oh! but I cannot place all my dependence upon that man. He is but the

head; I must have an arm." Louis all at once uttered a joyful cry. "I had," said he to the *valet de chambre*, "a lieutenant of Musketeers."

"Yes, Sire; M. d'Artagnan."

"He left the service for a time."

"Yes, Sire."

"Let him be found, and let him be here to-morrow at my levee."

The *valet de chambre* bowed and went out.

"Thirteen millions in my cellar," said the king, "Colbert bearing my purse, and D'Artagnan carrying my sword, — I am king!"

CHAPTER LI.

A PASSION.

THE day of his arrival, on returning from the Palais-Royal, Athos, as we have seen, went straight to his hotel in the Rue St. Honoré. He there found the Vicomte de Bragelonne waiting for him in his chamber, chatting with Grimaud. It was not an easy thing to talk with this old servant. Two men only possessed the secret, Athos and D'Artagnan. The first succeeded, because Grimaud sought to make him do the talking; D'Artagnan, on the contrary, because he knew how to make Grimaud talk. Raoul was occupied in making him describe the voyage to England; and Grimaud had related it in all its details, with a certain number of gestures, and eight words, neither more nor less. He had at first indicated, by an undulating movement of his hand, that his master and he had crossed the sea.

"Upon some expedition?" Raoul had asked.

Grimaud, by bending down his head, had answered, "Yes."

"When Monsieur the Count incurred much danger?" asked Raoul.

"Neither too much nor too little," Grimaud replied by a shrug of the shoulders.

"But, still, what sort of danger?" insisted Raoul.

Grimaud pointed to the sword; he pointed to the fire, and to a musket hung up over the wall.

"Monsieur the Count had an enemy over there, then?" cried Raoul.

"Monk," replied Grimaud.

"It is strange," continued Raoul, "that Monsieur the Count persists in regarding me as a novice, and not allowing me to share the honor and danger of his adventures."

Grimaud smiled. It was at this moment Athos came in. The landlord was lighting him up the stairs; and Grimaud, recognizing the step of his master, hastened to meet him, which cut short the conversation.

But Raoul was launched upon the sea of interrogatories, and did not stop. Taking both hands of the count, with warm but respectful tenderness, "How is it, Monsieur," said he, "that you started out upon a dangerous journey without bidding me adieu, without commanding the aid of my sword, — of myself, who ought to be your support, now that I have the strength, — of myself, whom you have brought up to be a man? Ah, Monsieur, why would you expose me to the cruel hazard of never seeing you again?"

"Who told you, Raoul, that my journey was a dangerous one?" replied the count, placing his cloak and hat in the hands of Grimaud, who had unbuckled his sword.

"I," said Grimaud.

"And why did you do so?" said Athos, sternly.

Grimaud was embarrassed. Raoul came to his assistance by answering for him: "It is natural, Monsieur, that our good Grimaud should tell me the truth in what concerns you. By whom should you be loved and supported, if not by me?"

Athos did not reply. He made a friendly motion to Grimaud, which sent him out of the room; he then seated himself in an armchair, while Raoul remained standing before him.

"But is it true," continued Raoul, "that your voyage was an expedition, and that fire and steel threatened you?"

"Say no more about that, Viscount," said Athos, mildly. "I set out hastily, it is true, but the service of King Charles II. required a prompt departure. As to your solicitude, I thank you for it, and I know that I can depend upon you. You have not wanted for anything, Viscount, in my absence, have you?"

"No, Monsieur, thank you."

"I left orders with Blaisois to pay you a hundred pistoles, if you should stand in need of money.'

"Monsieur, I have not seen Blaisois."

"You have been without money, then?"

"Monsieur, I had thirty pistoles left from the sale of the horses I took in my last campaign, and Monsieur the Prince had the kindness to let me win two hundred pistoles at play with him three months ago"

"Do you play? I don't like that, Raoul."

"I never play, Monsieur: it was Monsieur the Prince who ordered me to hold his cards at Chantilly, — one night when a courier came to him from the king. I won the stakes, and Monsieur the Prince commanded me to keep them."

"Is that a practice in the household, Raoul?" asked Athos, with a frown.

"Yes, Monsieur; every week Monsieur the Prince affords, upon one occasion or another, a similar advantage to one of his gentlemen. There are fifty gentlemen in his Highness's household; it was my turn that time."

"Very well! You went into Spain, then?"

"Yes, Monsieur, I made a very delightful and interesting journey."

"You have been back a month, have you not?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"And in the course of that month what have you done?"

"My duties, Monsieur."

"Have you not been home to La Fère?"

Raoul colored. Athos looked at him calmly and fixedly.

"You would be wrong not to believe me," said Raoul. "I feel that I colored, and in spite of myself. The question you did me the honor to ask is of a nature to cause me much emotion. I color, then, because I am agitated, not because I meditate a falsehood."

"I know, Raoul, that you never lie."

"No, Monsieur."

"Besides, my young friend, you would be wrong; what I wanted to say —"

"I know quite well, Monsieur. You would ask me if I have not been to Blois?"

"Exactly so."

"I have not been there; I have not even seen the person of whom you would speak to me."

The voice of Raoul trembled as he pronounced these words. Athos, a sovereign judge in all matters of delicacy, immediately added, "Raoul, you answer as if distressed; you are unhappy."

"Very, Monsieur; you have forbidden me to go to Blois, or to see Mademoiselle de la Vallière again." Here the young man stopped. That dear name, so delightful to pronounce, made his heart bleed, although so sweet upon his lips.

"And I have acted rightly, Raoul," Athos hastened to reply. "I am neither an unjust nor a barbarous father. I respect true love; but I look forward for you to a future, — an immense future. A new reign is about to dawn brightly upon us; war calls upon a young king full of chivalric spirit. What is wanting to assist this heroic

ardor is a battalion of young and free lieutenants who would rush to the fight with enthusiasm, and fall crying, '*Vive le Roi!*' instead of 'Adieu, my dear wife!' You know what I mean, Raoul. However brutal my reasoning may appear to be, I conjure you, then, to believe me, and to turn away your thoughts from those early days of youth in which you took up this habit of love, — days of effeminate carelessness, which soften the heart and render it incapable of containing those strong, bitter draughts called glory and adversity. Therefore, Raoul, I repeat to you, you should see in my counsel only the desire of being useful to you, only the ambition of seeing you prosper. I believe you capable of becoming a remarkable man. March alone, and you will march better and more quickly."

"You have commanded, Monsieur," replied Raoul, "and I obey."

"Commanded!" cried Athos. "Is it thus you reply to me? I have commanded you! Oh! you distort my words as you misconceive my intentions. I did not command you; I entreated you."

"No, Monsieur, you have commanded," said Raoul, persistently. "But had you only entreated me, your entreaty is still more effective than your order. I have not seen Mademoiselle de la Vallière again."

"But you are unhappy, you are unhappy!" insisted Athos.

Raoul made no reply.

"I find you pale; I find you sad. The sentiment is strong, then?"

"It is a passion," replied Raoul.

"No; a habit."

"Monsieur, you know that I have travelled much, that I have passed two years far from her. Any habit would

be broken up by an absence of two years, I believe; whereas on my return I loved, not more, — that was impossible, — but as much. Mademoiselle de la Vallière is for me the mate above all others; but you are for me a god upon earth, — to you I sacrifice everything."

"You are wrong," said Athos; "I have no longer any right over you. Age has emancipated you; you no longer even stand in need of my consent. Besides, I will not refuse my consent after what you have told me. Marry Mademoiselle de la Vallière, if you like."

Raoul started; but suddenly, "You are too good, Monsieur," said he, "and your concession excites my warmest gratitude; but I will not accept it."

"Then you now refuse?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"I will not oppose you in anything, Raoul."

"But you have at the bottom of your heart an opinion against this marriage; you have not chosen it for me."

"That is true."

"That is sufficient to make me cease to persist; I will wait."

"Take care, Raoul! what you are now saying is serious."

"I know it is, Monsieur. As I said, I will wait."

"Until I die?" said Athos, much agitated.

"Oh, Monsieur," cried Raoul, with tears in his eyes, "is it possible that you should wound my heart thus? I have never given you cause of complaint!"

"Dear boy, that is true," murmured Athos, pressing his lips violently together to suppress the emotion of which he was no longer master. "No, I will no longer afflict you; only I do not comprehend what you mean by waiting. Will you wait till you love no longer?"

"Ah! for that! No, Monsieur; I will wait till you change your opinion."

"I should like to put the matter to a test, Raoul; I should like to see if Mademoiselle de la Vallière will wait as you do."

"I hope so, Monsieur."

"But take care, Raoul! if she did not wait? Ah! you are so young, so confiding, so loyal! Women are changeable."

"You have never spoken ill to me of women, Monsieur; you have never had to complain of them. Why should you doubt Mademoiselle de la Vallière?"

"That is true," said Athos, lowering his eyes. "I have never spoken ill to you of women; I have never had to complain of them. Mademoiselle de la Vallière never caused me a suspicion; but when we are looking forward, we consider exceptions, even improbabilities! *If*, I say, Mademoiselle de la Vallière should not wait for you?"

"How could that be, Monsieur?"

"If she turned her eyes another way?"

"If she looked favorably upon another man, — do you mean that, Monsieur?" said Raoul, pale with agony.

"Exactly."

"Well, Monsieur, I would kill that man," said Raoul, simply, "and all the men whom Mademoiselle de la Vallière should choose, until one of them had killed me, or Mademoiselle de la Vallière had restored me her heart."

Athos started. "I thought," resumed he, in a hollow voice, "that you called me just now your god, your law, in this world."

"Oh!" said Raoul, trembling, "you would forbid me the duel?"

"If I forbade it, Raoul?"

"You would forbid me to hope, Monsieur; consequently you would not forbid me to die."

Athos raised his eyes towards the viscount. He had pronounced these words with the most melancholy inflection, accompanied by the most melancholy look. "Enough," said Athos, after a long silence, "enough of this subject, upon which we both go too far. Live from day to day, Raoul; perform your duties, love Mademoiselle de la Vallière; in a word, act like a man, since you have attained the age of a man; only do not forget that I love you tenderly, and that you profess to love me."

"Ah, Monsieur the Count!" cried Raoul, pressing the hand of Athos to his heart.

"Enough, dear boy! leave me; I want rest. By the way, M. d'Artagnan has returned from England with me; you owe him a visit."

"I will go and pay it, Monsieur, with great pleasure; I love M. d'Artagnan exceedingly."

"You are right in doing so; he is a worthy man and a brave cavalier."

"Who loves you dearly," said Raoul.

"I am sure of that. Do you know his address?"

"At the Louvre, I suppose, at the Palais-Royal, or wherever the king is. Does he not command the Musketeers?"

"No; at present M. d'Artagnan is absent on leave; he is resting a little. Do not, therefore, seek him at the posts of his service. You will hear of him at the house of a certain Planchet."

"His former lackey?"

"Exactly; turned grocer."

"I know; Rue des Lombards?"

"Something like that, or Rue des Arcis."

"I will find it, Monsieur, — I will find it."

"You will say a thousand kind things to him for me, and invite him to dine with me before I set out for La Fère."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Good-night, Raoul!"

"Monsieur, I see you wear an order I never saw you wear before; accept my compliments"

"The Fleece! — that is true. A plaything, my boy, which no longer amuses even an old child like myself. Good-night, Raoul."

CHAPTER LII.

D'ARTAGNAN'S LESSON.

RAOUL did not find D'Artagnan the next day, as he had hoped. He only met with Planchet, whose joy was great at seeing the young man again, and who contrived to pay him two or three little soldierly compliments, savoring very little of the grocer's shop. But as Raoul was returning from Vincennes the next day, at the head of fifty dragoons confided to him by the prince, he perceived, in the Place Baudoyer, a man with his nose in the air, examining a house, as we examine a horse we have a fancy to buy. This man, dressed in citizen costume buttoned up like a military doublet, a very small hat on his head, and a long shagreen-mounted sword by his side, turned his head as soon as he heard the step of the horses, and left off looking at the house to look at the dragoons. This was plainly M. d'Artagnan, — D'Artagnan on foot, D'Artagnan with his hands behind him, passing a little review upon the dragoons, after having reviewed the buildings. Not a man, not a tag, not a horse's hoof escaped his inspection.

Raoul rode at the side of his troop. D'Artagnan perceived him the last. "Eh!" said he, "eh! *mordioux!*"

"I was not mistaken!" cried Raoul, urging his horse towards him.

"Mistaken? No! Good-day to you," replied the ex-musketeer; while Raoul eagerly shook the hand of his old friend. "Take care, Raoul!" said D'Artagnan. "The

second horse of the fifth rank will lose a shoe before he gets to the Pont Marie; he has only two nails left in his off fore-foot."

"Wait a minute; I will come back," said Raoul.

"Can you leave your detachment?"

"The cornet is there to take my place."

"Then you will come and dine with me?"

"Most willingly, M. d'Artagnan."

"Be quick, then; leave your horse, or make them give me one."

"I prefer going back on foot with you."

Raoul hastened to give notice to the cornet, who took his place; he then dismounted, gave his horse to one of the dragoons, and with great delight seized the arm of M. d'Artagnan, who had watched him, during all these evolutions, with the satisfaction of a connoisseur.

"What! do you come from Vincennes?" said he, first of all.

"Yes, Monsieur the Chevalier."

"And the cardinal?"

"Is very ill; it is even reported he is dead."

"Are you on good terms with M. Fouquet?" asked D'Artagnan, with a disdainful movement of the shoulders, proving that the death of Mazarin did not affect him beyond measure.

"With M. Fouquet?" said Raoul; "I do not know him."

"So much the worse! so much the worse! for a new king always seeks to find tools."

"Oh! the king means no harm," replied the young man.

"I am not speaking about the crown," cried D'Artagnan, "but about the king. The king, — that is M. Fouquet, now that the cardinal is dead. You must contrive to stand well with M. Fouquet, if you do not wish to moulder away

all your life as I have mouldered. It is true you have, fortunately, other protectors."

"Monsieur the Prince, for instance."

"Worn out! worn out, my friend!"

"M. le Comte de la Fère."

"Athos! Oh! that's different; yes, Athos — and if you have any wish to make your way in England, you cannot apply to a better person. I can even say, without too much vanity, that I myself have some credit at the court of Charles II. There is a king, — God speed him!"

"Ah!" cried Raoul, with the artless curiosity of well-born young people while listening to experience and worth.

"Yes; a king who amuses himself, it is true, but who has had a sword in his hand, and can appreciate useful men. Athos is on good terms with Charles II. Take service there, and leave these scoundrels of contractors and farmers-general, who steal as well with French hands as others have stolen with Italian hands; leave the little snivelling king, who is going to give us another reign of Francis II. Do you know anything of history, Raoul?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Chevalier."

"Do you know, then, that Francis II. always had the earache?"

"No, I did not know that."

"That Charles IV. always had the headache?"

"Indeed!"

"And Henry III. always the stomach-ache?"

Raoul began to laugh.

"Well, my dear friend, Louis XIV. always has the heart-ache. It is deplorable to see a king sighing from morning till night, without saying once in the course of the day, '*Ventre-saint-gris!*' '*Corbœuf!*' or anything to rouse one."

"Was that the reason why you left the service, Monsieur the Chevalier?"

"Yes."

"But you yourself, M. d'Artagnan, are throwing the handle after the hatchet; you will never make your fortune."

"Who? I?" replied D'Artagnan, in a careless tone. "I am settled; I had some family property."

Raoul looked at him. The poverty of D'Artagnan was proverbial. A Gascon, he exceeded in ill-luck all the gasconnades of France and Navarre; Raoul had a hundred times heard Job and D'Artagnan mentioned together, like the twins Romulus and Remus. D'Artagnan caught Raoul's look of astonishment.

"And has not your father told you I have been in England?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Chevalier."

"And that I had there met with a very lucky chance?"

"No, Monsieur, I did not know that."

"Yes; a very worthy friend of mine, a great nobleman, the Viceroy of Scotland and Ireland, has endowed me with an inheritance."

"An inheritance?"

"And a good one too."

"Then you are rich! Receive my sincere congratulation."

"Thank you! Look! that is my house."

"Place de Grève?"

"Yes; you don't like this quarter?"

"Quite the contrary; the look-out on the water is pleasant. Oh, what a pretty old house!"

"The sign of Notre Dame; it is an old pot-house which I have transformed into a private house in two days."

"But the pot-house is still open?"

"Yes."

"And where do you lodge, then?"

"I? I lodge with Planchet."

"You said just now, 'There is my house.'"

"I said so, because, in fact, it is my house. I have bought it."

"Ah!" said Raoul.

"At ten years' purchase, my dear Raoul; a superb affair. I bought the house for thirty thousand livres. It has a garden which opens to the Rue de la Mortillerie; the pot-house lets for a thousand livres, together with the first story; the garret, or second floor, for five hundred livres."

"Five hundred livres for a garret? Why, that is not habitable."

"Therefore no one does inhabit it; only, you see this garret has two windows which look out upon the Place."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Well, then, every time anybody is broken on the wheel, or hung, quartered, or burnt, those two windows are let for as high as twenty pistoles."

"Oh!" said Raoul, with horror.

"It is disgusting, is it not?" said D'Artagnan. "It is disgusting, but so it is. These Parisian loungers are sometimes real anthropophagi. I cannot conceive how men, Christians, can enjoy such spectacles.

"That is true."

"As for myself," continued D'Artagnan, "if I inhabited that house, I would shut it up to the very keyholes on days of execution; but I do not inhabit it."

"And you let the garret for five hundred livres?"

"To the ferocious innkeeper, who sub-lets it. I said, then, fifteen hundred livres."

"The natural interest of money," said Raoul, "at five per cent."

"Exactly so. I then have left the body of the house at the back, — shops, lodgings, and cellars, inundated every winter, — two hundred livres; and the garden, which is very fine, well planted, well shaded under the walls and the portal of St. Gervais and St. Protais, thirteen hundred livres."

"Thirteen hundred livres! why, that is royal!"

"This is the history of it. I strongly suspect some canon of the parish, — these canons are all as rich as Crœsus, — I suspect some canon of having hired the garden to take his pleasure in. The tenant has given the name of M. Godard. That is either a false name or a real name: if true, he is a canon; if false, he is some unknown. But of what consequence is it to me? He always pays in advance. I had also an idea just now, when I met you, of buying a house in the Place Baudoyer, the back premises of which join my garden, and would make a magnificent property. Your dragoons interrupted my calculations. But come, let us take the Rue de la Vannerie; that will lead us straight to Master Planchet's."

D'Artagnan mended his pace, and conducted Raoul to Planchet's dwelling, a chamber of which the grocer had given up to his old master. Planchet was out, but the dinner was ready. There was a remnant of military regularity and punctuality preserved in the grocer's household. D'Artagnan returned to the subject of Raoul's future.

"Your father keeps you rather strictly?" said he.

"Justly, Monsieur the Chevalier."

"Oh, yes, I know Athos is just; but close, perhaps?"

"A royal hand, M. d'Artagnan."

"Well, never want, my boy! If ever you stand in need of a few pistoles, the old musketeer is at hand."

"My dear M. d'Artagnan!"

"Do you play a little?"

"Never."

"Successful with the ladies, then? You blush. Oh, my little Aramis! That, my dear friend, costs still more than play. It is true we fight when we lose; that is a compensation. Bah! the little snivellet of a king makes men who win pay the penalty for it. What a reign! my poor Raoul, what a reign! When I think that in my time the Musketeers were besieged in their houses, like Hector and Priam in the city of Troy; and then the women wept, and then the walls laughed, and then five hundred beggarly fellows clapped their hands, and cried, 'Kill! kill!' when not one musketeer was hurt! *Mordioux!* you will never see anything like that."

"You are very hard upon the king, my dear M. d'Artagnan; and yet you scarcely know him."

"I! Listen, Raoul. Day by day, hour by hour, — take note of my words, — I will predict what he will do. The cardinal being dead, he will weep: very well, that is the least silly thing he will do, particularly if he does not shed a tear."

"And then?"

"Why, then he will get M. Fouquet to allow him a pension, and will go and compose verses at Fontainebleau upon some Mancini or other, whose eyes the queen will scratch out. She is a Spaniard, you see, this queen of ours; and she has, as a mother-in-law, Madame Anne of Austria. I know something of the Spaniards of the house of Austria."

"And next?"

"Well, after having torn off the silver tags from the uniforms of his Swiss, because embroidery is too expensive, he will dismount the Musketeers, because the oats and hay of a horse cost five sols a day."

"Oh! do not say that."

"Of what consequence is it to me? I am no longer a musketeer, am I? Let them be on horseback; let them be on foot; let them carry a larding-needle, a spit, a sword, or nothing, — what is it to me?"

"My dear M. d'Artagnan, I beseech you, say no more ill to me of the king. I am almost in his service, and my father would be very angry with me for having heard even from your mouth words offensive to his Majesty."

"Your father, eh! He is a knight in every bad cause. Yes, your father is a brave man, — is a Cæsar, in fact, — but a man without perception."

"Now, my dear Chevalier," exclaimed Raoul, laughing, "you are going to speak ill of my father, of him you call the great Athos. You are in a wicked vein to-day; riches make you as sour as poverty makes other people."

"*Pardieu!* you are right. I am a rascal and in my dotage; I am an unhappy wretch grown old, — a forage-cord untwisted, a pierced cuirass, a boot without a sole, a spur without a rowel; but do me the pleasure to say one thing for me."

"What is that, my dear M. d'Artagnan?"

"Say this to me: 'Mazarin was a pitiful wretch.'"

"Perhaps he is dead."

"More the reason, — I say *was;* if I did not hope that he was dead, I would entreat you to say, 'Mazarin *is* a pitiful wretch.' Come say so, say so, for the love of me."

"Well, I will."

"Say it!"

"Mazarin was a pitiful wretch," said Raoul, smiling at the musketeer, who roared with laughter as in his best days.

"A moment!" said the latter. "You have spoken my first proposition; here is the conclusion. Repeat, Raoul, repeat: 'But I should feel regret for Mazarin.'"

"Chevalier!"

"You will not say it? Well, then, I will say it twice for you: 'But you would feel regret for Mazarin.'"

And they were still laughing and discussing this drafting a profession of principles, when one of the grocer's boys entered. "A letter, Monsieur, said he, "for M. d'Artagnan."

"Thank you; give it me," cried the musketeer.

"The handwriting of Monsieur the Count," said Raoul.

"Yes, yes;" and D'Artagnan broke the seal. It was from Athos.

"DEAR FRIEND,—A person has just been here to beg me to seek for you by the wish of the king."

"Seek me!" said D'Artagnan, letting the paper fall upon the table. Raoul picked it up, and continued to read aloud.

"Make haste. His Majesty is very anxious to speak to you, and expects you at the Louvre"

"Expects me!" again repeated the musketeer.

"He! he!" laughed Raoul.

"Oh, oh!" replied D'Artagnan. "What the devil can this mean?"

CHAPTER LIII.

THE KING.

THE first feeling of surprise over, D'Artagnan re-perused Athos' note. "It is strange," said he, "that the king should send for me."

"Why so?" said Raoul; "do you not think, Monsieur, that the king must wish such a servant as you back again?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the officer, laughing with all his might; "you are flattering me, Master Raoul. If the king had wanted me he would not have let me leave him. No, no; I see in it something better, or worse, if you like."

"Worse! What can that be, Monsieur the Chevalier?"

"You are young, you are sanguine, you are admirable. Oh, how I should like to be as you are! To be but twenty-four, with an unfurrowed brow, under which the brain is void of everything but woman, love, and good intentions! Oh, Raoul, as long as you have not received the smile of kings and the confidence of queens; as long as you have not had two cardinals killed under you, the one a tiger, the other a fox; as long as you have not — But what is the good of all this trifling? We must part, Raoul."

"With what a serious face you say that!"

"Ah! but the occasion is worthy of it. Listen to me! I have a very good recommendation to make you."

"I am all attention, M. d'Artagnan."

"You will go and inform your father of my departure."

"Your departure?"

"*Pardieu!* You will tell him that I have gone to England, and that I am living in my little country-house."

"To England, you! — And the king's orders?"

"You get more and more silly; do you imagine that I am going in that way to the Louvre, to place myself at the disposal of that little crowned wolf-cub?"

"The king a wolf-cub? Why, Monsieur the Chevalier, you are mad!"

"On the contrary, I was never so much otherwise. You do not know what he wants to do with me, this worthy son of Louis the Just. But, *mordioux!* that is policy. He wishes to ensconce me snugly in the Bastille, purely and simply; don't you see?"

"What for?" cried Raoul, terrified at what he heard.

"On account of what I told him one day at Blois. I was heated; he remembers it."

"You told him what?"

"That he was mean, cowardly, and silly."

"Good God!" cried Raoul, "is it possible that such words should have issued from your mouth?"

"Perhaps I don't give the letter of my discourse, but I give the sense of it."

"But did not the king have you arrested immediately?"

"By whom? It was I who commanded the Musketeers; he must have commanded me to convey myself to prison. I would never have consented; I would have resisted myself. And then I went into England — no more D'Artagnan. Now, the cardinal is dead, or nearly so; they learn that I am in Paris, and they lay their hands on me."

"The cardinal was, then, your protector?"

"The cardinal knew me; he knew certain peculiarities of mine. I also knew certain of his: we entertained for each other a mutual appreciation. And then, on surrendering his soul to the devil, he would recommend Anne of Austria to put me in a safe place. Go, then, and find your father; relate the fact to him, — and adieu!"

"My dear M. d'Artagnan," said Raoul, very much agitated, after having looked out of the window, "you cannot escape!"

"Why not?"

"Because there is below an officer of the Swiss Guards waiting for you."

"Well!"

"Well, he will arrest you."

D'Artagnan broke into an Homeric laugh.

"Oh! I know very well that you will resist, that you will fight even; I know very well that you will come off victor. But that amounts to rebellion; and you are an officer yourself, knowing what discipline is."

"Devil of a boy! how noble, how logical, that is!" grumbled D'Artagnan.

"You agree with me, don't you?"

"Yes. Instead of passing into the street, where that oaf is waiting for me, I will slip quietly out at the back. I have a horse in the stable, and a good one. I will ride him to death, — my means permit me to do so, — and by killing one horse after another, I shall arrive at Boulogne in eleven hours; I know the road. Tell your father only one thing."

"What is that?"

"This, — that what he knows about is at Planchet's house, except a fifth; and that —"

"But, my dear M. d'Artagnan, take care! If you run away, two things will be said of you."

"What are they, my dear friend?"

"The first, that you were afraid."

"Ah! and who will dare to say that?"

"The king, first of all."

"Well! but — he will tell the truth. I am afraid."

"The second, that you felt yourself guilty."

"Guilty of what?"

"Why, of the crimes they wish to impute to you."

"That is true again. So, then, you advise me to go and get myself put in the Bastille?"

"M. le Comte de la Fère would advise you just as I do."

"*Pardieu!* I know he would," said D'Artagnan, thoughtfully. "You are right. I shall not escape. But if they cast me into the Bastille?"

"We will get you out again," said Raoul, with a calm and quiet air.

"*Mordioux!* You said that after a brave fashion, Raoul," said D'Artagnan, seizing his hand; "that savors of Athos, truly. Well, I will go, then. Do not forget my last word."

"Except a fifth," said Raoul.

"Yes; you are a fine boy, and I want you to add one thing to that last word."

"Speak, Chevalier!"

"It is that if you cannot get me out of the Bastille, and I die there, — oh! that is a matter of course, and I shall be a detestable prisoner; I, who have been a passable man, — in that case, I give three fifths to you, and the fourth to your father."

"Chevalier!"

"If you want to have some masses said for me, you are welcome."

When he had done speaking, D'Artagnan took down his belt from the hook, girded on his sword, took a hat

with a fresh feather, and held his hand out to Raoul, who threw himself into his arms. When in the shop, he cast a quick glance at the shop-lads, who looked upon the scene with a pride mingled with some uneasiness; then plunging his hand into a box of dried currants, he went straight to the officer who was philosophically waiting for him at the door of the shop.

"Those features! Can it be you, M. de Friedisch? cried the musketeer, gayly. "Eh! eh! what! do we arrest our friends?"

"Arrest!" whispered the lads among themselves.

"Yes, it be I, M. d'Artagnan! Goot-tay to you!" said the Swiss.

"Must I give you up my sword? I warn you that it is long and heavy; you had better let me wear it to the Louvre. I feel quite lost in the streets without a sword, and you would be more at a loss than I should, with two."

"The king has gifen no orders apout it," replied the Swiss; "so keep your sword."

"Well, that is very polite on the part of the king. Let us go, at once."

M. de Friedisch was not a talker, and D'Artagnan had too much to think of to talk. From Planchet's shop to the Louvre was not far, — they arrived in ten minutes. It was night. M. de Friedisch wanted to enter by the wicket. "No," said D'Artagnan, "you would lose time by that; take the little staircase."

The Swiss did as D'Artagnan advised, and conducted him to the vestibule of the king's cabinet. When arrived there, he bowed to his prisoner, and without saying anything, returned to his post.

D'Artagnan had not had time to ask why his sword was not taken from him, when the door of the cabinet opened, and a *valet de chambre* called, "M. d'Artagnan!"

The musketeer assumed his parade carriage, and entered, with his eyes wide open, his brow calm, his mustache stiff. The king was seated at a table writing. He did not disturb himself when the step of the musketeer resounded on the floor; he did not even turn his head. D'Artagnan advanced as far as the middle of the room, and seeing that the king paid no attention to him, and suspecting, besides, that that was nothing but affectation, a sort of tormenting preamble to what was coming, he turned his back on the king, and began to examine minutely the frescos on the cornices, and the cracks in the ceiling. This manœuvre was accompanied by this silent little monologue: "Ah! you want to humble me, do you?—you, whom I have seen so young,—you, whom I have saved as I would my own child,—you, whom I have served as I would my God,—that is to say, for nothing. Wait awhile! wait awhile! you shall see what a man can do who has snuffed the fire of the Huguenots, under the beard of the cardinal,—the true cardinal!"

At this moment Louis turned round. "Ah! are you there, M. d'Artagnan?" said he.

D'Artagnan saw the movement, and imitated it. "Yes, Sire," said he.

"Very well; have the goodness to wait till I have added this up."

D'Artagnan made no reply; he only bowed. "That is polite enough," thought he; "I have nothing to say."

Louis made a violent dash with his pen, and threw it angrily away.

"Go on,—work yourself up!' thought the musketeer; "you will put me at my ease. You shall find I did not empty the bag the other day at Blois!"

Louis rose from his seat, passed his hand over his

brow; then, stopping opposite D'Artagnan, he looked at him with an air at once imperious and kind.

"What does he want with me? I wish he would get through with it," thought the musketeer.

"Monsieur," said the king, "you know, without doubt, that the cardinal is dead?"

"I suspected so, Sire."

"You know that, consequently, I am master in my own kingdom?"

"That is not a thing that dates from the death of the cardinal, Sire; a man is always master in his own house, when he wishes to be so."

"Yes; but do you remember all you said to me at Blois?"

"Now we are coming to it," thought D'Artagnan; "I was not deceived. Well, so much the better; it is a sign that my scent is tolerably keen yet."

"You do not answer me," said Louis.

"Sire, I think I recollect."

"You only think?"

"It is so long ago."

"If you do not remember, I do. This is what you said to me; listen with attention."

"Oh, I shall listen with all my ears, Sire; for it is very likely the conversation will turn in a fashion very interesting to me."

Louis once more looked at the musketeer. The latter smoothed the feather of his hat, then his mustache, and waited intrepidly. Louis XIV. continued: "You quitted my service, Monsieur, after having told me the whole truth?"

"Yes, Sire."

"That is, after having declared to me all you thought was true with regard to my mode of thinking and acting.

That is always a merit. You began by telling me that you had served my family thirty-four years, and were tired."

"I said so; yes, Sire."

"And you afterwards admitted that that fatigue was a pretext, and that discontent was the real cause."

"I was discontented, it is true, but that discontent has never betrayed itself that I know of; and if, like a man of heart, I have spoken out before your Majesty, I have not even thought of the matter in the presence of anybody else."

"Do not excuse yourself, D'Artagnan, but continue to listen to me. When reproaching me with the fact that you were discontented, you received in reply a promise. I said, 'Wait;' is not that true?"

"Yes, Sire, as true as what I told you."

"You answered me, 'Hereafter? No; now, immediately.' Do not excuse yourself, I tell you. It was natural; but you had no charity for your poor prince, M. d'Artagnan."

"Sire, charity for a king on the part of a poor soldier!"

"You understand me very well. You know that I stood in need of it; you know very well that I was not master; you know very well that my hope was in the future. Now, you replied to me when I spoke of that future, 'My discharge, and that directly!'"

"That is true," murmured D'Artagnan, biting his mustache.

"You did not flatter me when I was in distress," added Louis.

"But," said D'Artagnan, raising his head nobly, "if I did not flatter your Majesty when poor, neither did I betray you. I have shed my blood for nothing; I have watched like a dog at a door, knowing full well that

neither bread nor bone would be thrown to me. I, although poor likewise, asked nothing of your Majesty but the discharge you speak of."

"I know you are a brave man; but I was a young man, and you ought to have treated me with some consideration. What had you to reproach the king with, — that he left King Charles II. without succor? Let us speak further, — that he did not marry Mademoiselle de Mancini?" As he said these words, the king fixed upon the musketeer a searching look.

"Ah!" thought the latter, "he is doing more than remembering; he is interpreting. The devil!"

"Your judgment," continued Louis, "fell upon the king and fell upon the man. But, M. d'Artagnan, that weakness, — for you considered it a weakness?" D'Artagnan made no reply. "You reproached me also with regard to the now deceased cardinal. Now, did not the cardinal bring me up, did he not support me? — elevating himself and supporting himself at the same time, I admit; but the benefit was discharged. Had I been an ingrate, an egotist, would you, then, have better loved me or served me?"

"Sire!"

"We will say no more about it, Monsieur; it would only cause you too many regrets, and me too much pain."

D'Artagnan was not convinced. The young king, in adopting a tone of hauteur with him, did not advance his purpose.

"You have since reflected?" resumed Louis.

"Upon what, Sire?" asked D'Artagnan, politely.

"Why, upon all that I have said to you, Monsieur."

"Yes, Sire, no doubt —"

"And you have only waited for an opportunity of retracting your words?"

"Sire!"

"You hesitate, it seems."

"I do not understand what your Majesty did me the honor to say to me?" Louis's brow became cloudy. "Have the goodness to excuse me, Sire. My understanding is particularly thick; things do not penetrate it without difficulty; but it is true that when once they get in, they remain there."

"Yes, you appear to have a memory."

"Almost as good as your Majesty's."

"Then give me quickly an explanation. My time is valuable. What have you been doing since your discharge?"

"Making my fortune, Sire."

"The expression is rude, M. d'Artagnan."

"Your Majesty takes it in bad part, certainly. I entertain nothing but the profoundest respect for the king; and if I have been impolite, which might be excused by my long sojourn in camps and barracks, your Majesty is too much above me to be offended at a word innocently spoken by a soldier."

"In fact, I know that you have done a brilliant deed in England, Monsieur. I only regret that you have broken your promise."

"I!" cried D'Artagnan.

"Certainly. You pledged your word not to serve any other prince on quitting my service. Now, it was for King Charles II. that you undertook the marvellous carrying off of M. Monk."

"Pardon me, Sire; it was for myself."

"And was it a success for you?"

"As exploits and adventures were to the captains of the fifteenth century."

"What do you call succeeding? — a fortune?"

"A hundred thousand crowns, Sire, which I possess, — that is, in one week, three times as much money as I ever had in fifty years."

"It is a handsome sum. But you are ambitious, I believe?"

"I, Sire? The quarter of it would be a treasure, and I swear to you I have no thought of augmenting it."

"What! do you contemplate remaining idle?"

"Yes, Sire."

"To relinquish the sword?"

"I have already done that."

"Impossible, M. d'Artagnan!" said Louis, firmly.

"But, Sire —"

"Well?"

"Why not?"

"Because I will that you shall not!" said the young prince, in a voice so stern and imperious that D'Artagnan evinced surprise and even uneasiness.

"Will your Majesty allow me one word of reply?" he asked.

"Speak."

"I formed that resolution when I was poor and destitute."

"So be it! Go on."

"Now, when by my industry I have acquired a comfortable means of subsistence, would your Majesty despoil me of my liberty? Your Majesty would condemn me to the least, when I have gained the most."

"Who gave you permission, Monsieur, to fathom my designs, or to reckon with me?" replied Louis, in a voice almost angry. "Who told you what I shall do, or what you will yourself do?"

"Sire," said the musketeer, quietly, "so far as I see, freedom is not in order in this conversation, as I believe

it was on the day that we came to an explanation at Blois."

"No, Monsieur; everything is changed."

"I render your Majesty my sincere congratulations, but —"

"But you don't believe it?"

"I am not a great statesman, and yet I have my eye upon affairs; it seldom fails. Now, I do not see exactly as your Majesty does, Sire. The reign of Mazarin is over, but that of the financiers has begun. They have the money; your Majesty will not often see much of it. To live under the paw of those hungry wolves is hard for a man who reckoned upon independence."

At this moment some one scratched at the door of the cabinet. The king raised his head proudly. "Your pardon, M. d'Artagnan," said he; "it is M. Colbert, who comes to make me a report. Come in, M. Colbert!"

D'Artagnan drew back. Colbert entered, his papers in his hand, and went up to the king. You may believe that the Gascon did not lose the opportunity of applying his keen, quick glance to the new figure which presented itself.

"Is the inquiry finished, then?" asked the king of Colbert.

"Yes, Sire."

"And the opinion of the inquisitors?"

"Is that the accused merit confiscation and death."

"Ah!" said the king, without changing countenance, and casting a glance at D'Artagnan. "And your own opinion, M. Colbert?" said he.

Colbert looked at D'Artagnan in his turn. That imposing countenance checked the words upon his lips. Louis perceived this. "Do not be disturbed," said he; "it is M. d'Artagnan. Do you not recognize M. d'Artagnan?"

These two men looked at each other, — D'Artagnan with his eyes open and bright, Colbert with his eyes half-closed and dim. The frank intrepidity of the one displeased the other; the cautious circumspection of the financier displeased the soldier.

"Ah! this is the gentleman who made that brilliant stroke in England," said Colbert; and he bowed slightly to D'Artagnan.

"Ah!" said the Gascon, "this is the gentleman who clipped off the silver lace from the uniform of the Swiss. A praiseworthy piece of economy!" and he bowed profoundly.

The financier thought to embarrass the musketeer; but the musketeer ran the financier right through.

"M. d'Artagnan," resumed the king, who had not remarked all these shades of meaning, of which Mazarin would not have missed one, "this concerns the farmers of the revenue who have robbed me, whom I am hanging, and whose death-warrants I am about to sign."

"Oh! oh!" said D'Artagnan, starting.

"What did you say?"

"Oh, nothing, Sire! this is no business of mine."

The king had already taken up the pen, and was applying it to the paper.

"Sire," said Colbert, in a low voice, "I beg to warn your Majesty that if an example be necessary, that example may present some difficulty in its execution."

"You are saying —" said Louis.

"You must not conceal from yourself," continued Colbert, quietly, "that attacking the farmers-general is attacking the superintendence. The two unfortunate guilty men in question are the particular friends of a powerful personage; and on the day of the punishment, which otherwise might be hushed up in the *châtelet*, disturbances will arise without doubt."

Louis colored and turned towards D'Artagnan, who was calmly gnawing his mustache, not without a smile of pity for the financier, as likewise for the king, who had to listen to him so long. But Louis seized the pen, and with a movement so rapid that his hand shook, affixed his signature at the bottom of the two papers presented by Colbert; then, looking the latter in the face, "M. Colbert," said he, "when you speak to me of affairs, exclude, in general, the word 'difficulty' from your reasonings and opinions; as to the word 'impossibility,' never pronounce it."

Colbert bowed, much humiliated at having undergone such a lesson before the musketeer. He was about to go out; but, anxious to make up for his rebuff, "I forgot to announce to your Majesty," said he, "that the confiscations amount to the sum of five million livres."

"That 's pretty," thought D'Artagnan.

"Which makes in my coffers —" said the king.

"Eighteen million livres, Sire," replied Colbert, bowing.

"*Mordioux!*" grumbled D'Artagnan, "that 's fine!"

"M. Colbert," added the king, "you will, if you please, go through the gallery where M. de Lyonne is waiting, and will tell him to bring hither what he has drawn up — by my order."

"Directly, Sire; if your Majesty wants me no more this evening?"

"No, Monsieur; adieu!" and Colbert went out.

"Now let us return to our affair, M. d'Artagnan," resumed the king, as if nothing had happened. "You see that with respect to money there is already a notable change."

"Something like from zero to eighteen millions," replied the musketeer, gayly. "Ah! that was what your Majesty wanted the day King Charles II. came to Blois.

The two States would not have been embroiled to-day; for I must say that there also I see a stumbling-block."

"Well, in the first place," retorted Louis, "you are unjust, Monsieur; for if Providence had permitted me to give my brother the million that day, you would not have quitted my service, and consequently you would not have made your fortune, as you told me just now you have done. But in addition to this, I have had another piece of good fortune; and my difference with Great Britain need not alarm you."

A *valet de chambre* interrupted the king by announcing M. de Lyonne. "Come in, Monsieur," said the king; "you are punctual; that is like a good servant. Let us see your letter to my brother Charles II."

D'Artagnan pricked up his ears. "A moment, Monsieur!" said Louis, carelessly, to the Gascon; "I must despatch to London my consent to the marriage of my brother, M. le Duc d'Anjou, with the Princess Henrietta Stuart."

"He is drubbing me, it seems," murmured D'Artagnan, while the king signed the letter, and dismissed M. de Lyonne; "but, faith! I confess the more he drubs me in this manner, the better I shall be pleased."

The king followed M. de Lyonne with his eyes, till the door was closed behind him. He even took three steps, as if he would follow the minister; but after these three steps, he stopped, turned, and came back to the musketeer. "Now, Monsieur, said he, "let us hasten to conclude. You told me the other day, at Blois, that you were not rich?"

"But I am now, Sire."

"Yes, but that does not concern me. You have your own money, not mine; that does not enter into my account."

"I do not well understand what your Majesty means."

"Well, instead of stopping to choose your words, speak up like a man! Would you be satisfied with twenty thousand livres a year, as a fixed income?"

"But, Sire," said D'Artagnan, opening his eyes to the utmost.

"Would you be satisfied with four horses furnished and kept, and with a contingent fund for what you would require, according to occasion and need; or would you prefer a fixed sum which might be, for instance, forty thousand livres? Answer!"

"Sire, your Majesty —"

"Yes, you are surprised; that is natural, and I expected it. Answer me, come! or I shall think you have no longer that rapidity of judgment I have so much valued in you."

"It is certain, Sire, that twenty thousand livres a year make a handsome sum; but —"

"No buts! Yes or no, is it a suitable indemnity?"

"Oh! certainly —"

"You will be satisfied with it? That is well. It will be better, too, to reckon the extra expenses separately; you can arrange that with Colbert. Now let us pass to something more important."

"But, Sire, I told your Majesty —"

"That you wanted rest. I know you did; only, I replied that I would not allow it. I am master, I suppose?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Very well. You were formerly in the mood to become captain of the Musketeers?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Well, here is your commission signed. I will place it in this drawer. The day on which you shall return from a certain expedition which I am about to confide to

you, on that day you may yourself take the commission from the drawer." D'Artagnan still hesitated, and hung down his head. "Come, Monsieur," said the king, "one would believe, to look at you, that you did not know that at the court of the most Christian king the captain-general of the Musketeers takes precedence of the marshals of France."

"Sire, I know he does."

"Then I must fancy you do not put faith in my word?"

"Oh, Sire, never, never dream of such a thing!"

"I have wished to prove to you that you, so good a servant, had lost a good master; am I anything like the master that will suit you?"

"I begin to think you are, Sire."

"Then, Monsieur, you will resume your functions. Your company is quite disorganized since your departure, and the men go strolling about and rioting in the pot-houses, where they fight, in spite of my edicts or those of my father. You will reorganize the service as quickly as possible."

"Yes, Sire."

"You will not again quit my person."

"Very well, Sire."

"You will march with me to the army; you will encamp round my tent."

"Then, Sire," said D'Artagnan, "if it is only for imposing upon me a service like that, your Majesty need not give me twenty thousand livres. I shall not earn them."

"I desire that you shall keep open house, an open table; I desire that my captain of Musketeers shall be a person of importance."

"And I," said D'Artagnan, bluntly, — "I do not like easily gotten money. I like money won! Your Majesty

gives me an idle trade, which the first comer would perform for four thousand livres."

Louis XIV began to laugh. "You are a true Gascon, M. d'Artagnan; you will draw my heart's secret from me."

"Has your Majesty a secret, then?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Well! then I accept the twenty thousand livres; for I will keep that secret, and discretion is above all price in these times. Will your Majesty speak now?"

"You will get booted, M. d'Artagnan, and mount on horseback."

"Directly, Sire."

"Within two days."

"That is well, Sire; for I have my affairs to settle before I set out, particularly if it is likely there should be any blows to receive."

"That may happen."

"Let them come. But, Sire, you have addressed yourself to the avarice, to the ambition, — you have addressed yourself to the heart of M. d'Artagnan, but you have forgotten one thing."

"What is that?"

"You have said nothing to his vanity; when shall I be a knight of the king's orders?"

"Does that interest you?"

"Why, yes. My friend Athos is quite bestarred, and that dazzles me."

"You shall be a knight of my order a month after you have taken your commission of captain."

"Ah!" said the officer, thoughtfully, "after the expedition."

"Precisely."

"Where is your Majesty going to send me?"

"Are you acquainted with Bretagne?"

"No, Sire."

"Have you any friends there?"

"In Bretagne? No, faith!"

"So much the better. Do you know anything about fortifications?"

"I believe I do, Sire," said D'Artagnan, smiling.

"That is to say, you can readily distinguish a fortress from a simple fortification, such as is allowed to our vassal *châtelains?*"

"I distinguish a fort from a rampart as I distinguish a cuirass from a pie-crust, Sire. Is that sufficient?"

"Yes, Monsieur. You will set out, then?"

"For Bretagne?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Absolutely alone; that is to say, you must not even take a lackey with you."

"May I ask your Majesty for what reason?"

"Because, Monsieur, it will be necessary to disguise yourself sometimes as the servant of a good family. Your face is very well known in France, M. d'Artagnan."

"And then, Sire?"

"And then you will travel slowly through Bretagne, and will examine carefully the fortifications of that country."

"The coasts?"

"Yes, and the isles; beginning with Belle-Isle-en-Mer."

"Which belongs to M. Fouquet," said D'Artagnan, in a serious tone, raising his intelligent eyes to Louis XIV.

"I fancy you are right, Monsieur, and that Belle-Isle does belong to M. Fouquet, in fact."

"Then your Majesty wishes me to ascertain if Belle-Isle is a good place?"

"Yes."

"And if its fortifications are new or old?"

"Precisely."

"And if, perhaps, the vassals of the superintendent are sufficiently numerous to form a garrison?"

"That is what I want to know; you have hit it exactly."

"And if they are not fortifying, Sire?"

"You will travel about Bretagne, listening and judging."

"Then I am a king's spy?" said D'Artagnan, bluntly, twisting his mustache.

"No, Monsieur."

"Your pardon, Sire; I spy on your Majesty's account."

"You go on a discovery, Monsieur. Would you march at the head of your Musketeers, sword in hand, to reconnoitre any spot whatever, or an enemy's position?"

At these words D'Artagnan started imperceptibly.

"Would you," continued the king, "imagine yourself to be a spy?"

"No, no," said D'Artagnan, but pensively. "The thing changes its character when one watches an enemy; one is but a soldier. And if they are fortifying Belle-Isle?" added he, quickly.

"You will make an exact plan of the fortifications."

"Will they permit me to enter?"

"That does not concern me; that is your affair. Did you not understand that I reserved for you a contingent of twenty thousand livres per annum, if you wished for it?"

"Yes, Sire; but if they are not fortifying?"

"You will return quietly, without fatiguing your horse."

"Sire, I am ready."

"You will begin to-morrow by going to Monsieur the

Superintendent's to draw the first quarter of the pension I allow you. Do you know M. Fouquet?"

"Very little, Sire; but I beg your Majesty to observe that it is not urgent that I should know him."

"I ask your pardon, Monsieur; but he will refuse you the money I wish you to take, and it is that refusal I look for."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan. "And then, Sire?"

"The money being refused, you will go and seek it at M. Colbert's. By the way, have you a good horse?"

"An excellent one, Sire."

"How much did it cost you?"

"A hundred and fifty pistoles."

"I will buy it of you. Here is a note for two hundred pistoles."

"But I want my horse for my journey, Sire."

"Well!"

"Well, and you take mine from me."

"Not at all. On the contrary, I give it to you. Only, as it is now mine and not yours, I am sure you will not spare it."

"Your Majesty is in a hurry, then?"

"A great hurry."

"Then what compels me to wait two days?"

"Two reasons known to myself."

"That is different. The horse may make up the two days in the eight he has for the journey; and then there is the post."

"No, no; the post compromises, M. d'Artagnan. Go, and do not forget you are mine."

"Sire, it was not I who ever forgot it. At what hour shall I take my leave of your Majesty day after to-morrow?"

"Where do you lodge?"

"I must henceforward lodge at the Louvre."

"That must not be now. Keep your lodgings in the city; I will pay for them. As for your departure, it must take place at night, because you must set out without being seen by any one, or, if you are seen, it must not be known that you belong to me. A close mouth, Monsieur!"

"Your Majesty spoils all you have said by that single word."

"I asked you where you lodged, for I cannot always send to M. le Comte de la Fère to seek you."

"I lodge with M. Planchet, a grocer, Rue des Lombards, at the sign of the Pilon d'Or."

"Go out but little; show yourself still less, and await my orders."

"And yet, Sire, I must go for the money."

"That is true; but when going to the superintendent's, where so many people are constantly going, you must mingle with the crowd."

"I want the drafts, Sire, for the money."

"Here they are."

The king signed them, and D'Artagnan looked on to assure himself of their correctness. "That is money," said he; "and money is either read or counted."

"Adieu, M. d'Artagnan!" added the king; "I think you have perfectly understood me."

"I? I understood that your Majesty sends me to Belle-Isle-en-Mer; that is all."

"To learn —"

"To learn how M. Fouquet's works are going on; that is all."

"Very well; I admit you may be captured."

"And I do not admit it," replied the Gascon, boldly.

"I admit that you may be killed," continued the king.

"That is not probable, Sire."

"In the first case, you must not speak; in the second, there must be no paper found upon you to speak."

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders without ceremony, and took leave of the king, saying to himself, "The English shower continues; let us remain under the spout!"

CHAPTER LIV.

M. FOUQUET'S HOUSES.

While D'Artagnan was returning to Planchet's house, his head aching and bewildered with all that had just happened to him, there was passing a scene of quite a different character, which nevertheless is not foreign to the conversation our musketeer had just had with the king; only, this scene took place outside of Paris, in a house owned by the superintendent Fouquet in the village of St. Mandé.

The minister had just arrived at this country-house, followed by his chief clerk, who carried an enormous portfolio full of papers to be examined and others requiring signature. As it was about five o'clock in the afternoon, the masters had dined; supper was preparing for twenty inferior guests. The superintendent did not stop; on alighting from his carriage, with the same bound he sprang through the doorway, rushed through the apartments and gained his office, where he declared he would shut himself up to work, commanding that he should not be disturbed for anything but an order from the king. As soon as this direction had been given, Fouquet shut himself up, and two footmen were placed as sentinels at his door. Then Fouquet pushed a bolt which moved a panel that walled up the entrance, and prevented everything that passed in this office from being either seen or heard. But, improbable as it may seem, it was indeed to be alone that Fouquet shut himself up thus; for he went

straight to his desk, seated himself at it, opened the portfolio, and began to sort the enormous mass of papers it contained.

It was not more than ten minutes after he had entered and taken all the precautions we have described, that the repeated noise of several regular taps struck his ear, and appeared to engross his attention. Fouquet raised his head, turned his ear, and listened. The taps continued. Then the worker rose with a slight movement of impatience, and walked straight up to a glass behind which the blows were struck by a hand or by some invisible mechanism. It was a large glass let into a panel. Three other glasses, exactly similar to it, completed the symmetry of the apartment. Nothing distinguished that from the others. Without doubt, these repeated taps were a signal, for at the moment when Fouquet approached the glass listening, the same noise was renewed, and in the same measure.

"Oh!" murmured the superintendent, with surprise, "who is yonder? I did not expect any one to-day;" and, probably to answer the signal that had been made, he pulled a gilded nail in that same glass, and shook it thrice. Then returning to his place, and seating himself again, "Faith! let them wait," said he; and plunging again into the ocean of papers unrolled before him, he appeared to think of nothing but work. In fact, with incredible rapidity and marvellous clearness, Fouquet deciphered the largest papers and most complicated writings, correcting them, annotating them with a pen moved as if by a fever; and the work dissolving under his hands, signatures, figures, references, multiplied themselves as if ten clerks — that is to say, a hundred fingers and ten brains — had performed the duties, instead of the ten fingers and single brain of this man. From time to

time only, Fouquet, absorbed in his work, raised his head to cast a furtive glance upon a clock placed before him. The reason for this was that Fouquet had set himself a task; and when this task was once set, in one hour's work he, by himself, did what another would not have accomplished in a day, — always certain, provided he was not disturbed, to arrive at the end in the time his devouring activity had fixed. But in the midst of his ardent labor the quick strokes upon the little bell, placed behind the glass, sounded once more, hasty, and consequently more urgent.

"The lady appears to be getting impatient," said Fouquet. "Humph! a calm! That must be the countess; but no, the countess has gone to Rambouillet for three days. The president's wife, then? Oh, no! the president's wife would not assume such grand airs; she would ring very humbly, and then await my good pleasure. It is very certain that while I may not know who it can be, I do know who it cannot be. And since it is not you, Marchioness, since it cannot be you, a fig for the rest!" and he went on with his work in spite of the repeated appeals of the bell.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, however, impatience seized Fouquet in his turn. He consumed rather than finished the remainder of his task; he thrust his papers into the portfolio, and giving a glance at the mirror, while the taps continued faster than ever, "Now," said he, "whence comes all this racket? What has happened, and who can the Ariadne be who expects me so impatiently? Let us see!"

He then applied the tip of his finger to the nail parallel to the one he had drawn. Immediately the glass moved like the fold of a door, and discovered a secret closet, rather deep, in which the superintendent disappeared as

if going into a vast box. When there, he touched another spring, which opened, not a board, but a block of the wall; and he went out by that opening, leaving the door to shut of itself. Then Fouquet descended a score or more of steps which sank, winding, underground, and came to a long, paved, subterranean passage, lighted by invisible loop-holes. The walls of this vault were covered with slabs, or tiles, and the floor with carpeting. This passage was under the street itself which separated Fouquet's house from the Park of Vincennes. At the end of the passage ascended a winding staircase parallel with that by which Fouquet had descended. He mounted these other stairs, entered by means of a spring placed in a closet similar to that in his office, and from this closet passed into a chamber entirely unoccupied, although furnished with the utmost elegance. As soon as he entered, he examined carefully whether the glass closed without leaving any trace, and, doubtless satisfied with his observation, he opened, by means of a small gilded key, the triple fastenings of a door in front of him. This time the door opened upon a handsome boudoir, sumptuously furnished, in which was seated upon cushions a lady of surpassing beauty, who at the sound of the lock sprang towards Fouquet.

"Good heavens!" cried the latter, starting back with astonishment. "Madame la Marquise de Bellière! you here?"

"Yes," murmured the Marchioness, — "yes; it is I, Monsieur."

"Marchioness! dear marchioness!" added Fouquet, ready to prostrate himself before her. "My God! how did you come here? and I, to keep you waiting!"

"A long time, Monsieur; yes, a very long time!"

"I am happy in thinking this waiting has appeared long to you, Marchioness!"

"Oh, an eternity, Monsieur! I rang more than twenty times. Did you not hear me?"

"Marchioness, you are pale, you are trembling."

"Did you not hear, then, that you were summoned?"

"Oh, yes, I heard plainly enough, Madame; but I could not come. After your severity and your refusal, how could I dream it was you? If I could have had any suspicion of the happiness that awaited me, believe me, Madame, I would have left everything to fall at your feet as I do at this moment."

"Are we quite alone, Monsieur?" asked the Marchioness, looking round the room.

"Oh, yes, Madame; I can assure you of that."

"Really?" said the Marchioness, in a melancholy tone.

"You sigh," said Fouquet.

"What mysteries! what precautions!" said the marchioness, with a slight bitterness of expression; "and how evident it is that you fear the least suspicion of your amours!"

"Would you prefer their being made public?"

"Oh, no! you act like a considerate man," said the marchioness, smiling.

"Come, dear marchioness, punish me not with reproaches, I implore you."

"Reproaches! Have I a right to make you any?"

"No, unfortunately, no; but tell me, you whom for a year I have loved without return and without hope —"

"You are mistaken, — without hope it is true, but not without return."

"Oh! for me, there is but one proof of love; and that proof I still want."

"I have come to bring it to you, Monsieur."

Fouquet wished to clasp her in his arms, but she disengaged herself with a slight movement.

"You persist in deceiving yourself, Monsieur, and never will accept from me the only thing I am willing to give you, — devotion."

"Ah, then, you do not love me? Devotion is but a virtue; love is a passion."

"Listen to me, I implore you! I should not have come hither without a serious motive; you are well assured of that, are you not?"

"The motive is of very little consequence, so that you are but here, — so that I see you, so that I speak to you!"

"You are right; the principal thing is that I am here without any one having seen me, and that I can speak to you."

Fouquet sank on his knees before her. "Speak! speak, Madame!" said he, "I am listening."

The marchioness looked at Fouquet, on his knees at her feet; and there was in the gaze of the woman a strange mixture of love and melancholy.

"Oh!" at length murmured she, "would that I were she who has the right of seeing you every minute, of speaking to you every instant! would that I were she who watches over you, she who has no need of mysterious springs to summon and cause to appear, like a sylph, the man she loves, to gaze at him for an hour, and then see him disappear in the darkness of a mystery still more strange at his going out than at his coming in! Oh, I should be a happy woman!"

"Do you happen, Marchioness," said Fouquet, smiling, "to be speaking of my wife?"

"Yes, certainly; of her I spoke."

"Well, you need not envy her lot, Marchioness; of all the women with whom I have relations, Madame Fouquet is the one I see the least of, and who has the least intercourse with me."

"At least, Monsieur, she is not reduced to place, as I have done, her hand upon the ornament of a mirror to call you to her; at least you do not reply to her by the mysterious, frightful sound of a bell, the spring of which comes from I don't know where; at least you have not forbidden her to endeavor to discover the secret of these communications under pain of breaking off forever your connections with her, as you have forbidden all who have come here before me, and all who shall come after me."

"Dear Marchioness, how unjust you are, and how little do you know what you are doing in thus exclaiming against mystery! It is with mystery alone we can love without trouble, and it is with love without trouble alone that we can be happy. But let us return to ourselves, to that devotion of which you were speaking; or rather, Marchioness, let me labor under a pleasing delusion, and believe that this devotion is love."

"Just now," repeated the Marchioness, passing over her eyes a hand modelled upon most graceful classic lines, — "just now I was prepared to speak, my ideas were clear, bold; now I am quite confused, quite troubled. I fear I bring you bad news."

"If it is to that bad news I owe your presence, Marchioness, welcome be that bad news! or rather, Marchioness, since you allow that I am not quite indifferent to you, let me hear nothing of the bad news, but speak of yourself."

"No, no! on the contrary, demand it of me; require me to tell it to you instantly, and not to allow myself to be turned aside by any feeling whatever. Fouquet, my friend! it is of immense importance."

"You astonish me, Marchioness; I will even say you almost frighten me. You, so serious, so collected; you who know the world we live in so well! Is it then serious?"

"Oh, very serious!"

"In the first place, how did you come here?"

"You shall know that presently; but first to something of more consequence."

"Speak, Marchioness, speak! I implore you, have pity on my impatience."

"Do you know that Colbert is made intendant of the finances?"

"Bah! Colbert, little Colbert!"

"Yes; Colbert, little Colbert!"

"Mazarin's factotum?"

"The same."

"Well! what do you see so terrific in that, dear marchioness? Little Colbert is intendant, — that is astonishing, I confess, but it is not terrific."

"Do you think the king has given, without a pressing motive, such a place to one you call a little scullion?"

"In the first place, is it positively true that the king has given it to him?"

"It is so said."

"Ay, but who says so?"

"Everybody."

"Everybody, that's nobody; mention some one likely to be well informed who says so."

"Madame Vanel."

"Ah! now you begin to frighten me in earnest," said Fouquet, laughing. "The fact is, that if any one is well informed, or ought to be well informed, it is the person you name."

"Do not speak ill of poor Marguerite, M. Fouquet; for she still loves you."

"Bah! indeed? That is scarcely credible. I thought little Colbert, as you said just now, had passed over that love, and left upon it a spot of ink or a stain of grease."

"Fouquet! Fouquet! is this the way you always act towards the poor women you desert?"

"Why, you surely are not going to undertake the defence of Madame Vanel?"

"Yes, I will undertake it; for, I repeat, she loves you still, and the proof is that she saves you."

"By your interposition, Marchioness; that is cunning on her part. No angel could be more agreeable to me, or could lead me more certainly to salvation. But let me ask you, do you know Marguerite?"

"She was my friend at the convent."

"And you say that she has informed you that M. Colbert was appointed intendant?"

"Yes, she did."

"Well, enlighten me, Marchioness; granted M. Colbert is intendant, so be it. In what can an intendant — that is to say, my subordinate, my clerk — give me umbrage or injure me, even were he M. Colbert?"

"You do not reflect, Monsieur, apparently," replied the marchioness.

"Upon what?"

"This, — that M. Colbert hates you."

"Hates me!" cried Fouquet. "Good heavens! Marchioness, whence do you come, where can you live? Hates me! why, all the world hates me, — he as others do."

"He more than others."

"More than others? let him."

"He is ambitious."

"Who is not, Marchioness?"

"Yes; but with him ambition has no bounds."

"I am quite aware of that, since he made it a point to succeed me with Madame Vanel."

"And obtained his end; look to that!"

"Do you mean to say he has the presumption to hope to pass from intendant to superintendent?"

"Have you not yourself already had the same fear?"

"Oh!" said Fouquet, "to succeed me with Madame Vanel is one thing, to succeed me with the king is another. France is not to be purchased as easily as the wife of an accountant."

"Eh! Monsieur, everything is to be bought; if not by gold, by intrigue."

"Nobody knows to the contrary better than you, Madame, — you to whom I have offered millions."

"Instead of millions, Fouquet, you should have offered me a true, single, and boundless love; I might have accepted that. So, you see still, everything is to be bought, — if not in one way, in another."

"So Colbert, in your opinion, is in a fair way to secure my place of superintendent. Make yourself easy on that head, my dear marchioness; he is not yet rich enough to purchase it."

"But if he should rob you of it?"

"Ah! that is another thing. Unfortunately, before he can reach me, — that is to say, the body of the place, — he must destroy, must make a breach in the outer works; and I am devilishly well fortified, Marchioness."

"What you call your outworks are your creatures, are they not, — your friends?"

"Exactly so."

"And is M. d'Eymeris one of your creatures?"

"Yes, he is."

"Is M. Lyodot one of your friends?"

"Certainly."

"M. de Vanin?"

"M. de Vanin! Ah! they may do what they like with him, but —"

"But —"

"But they must not touch the others."

"Well, if you are anxious they should not touch Messieurs d'Eymeris and Lyodot, it is time to look about you."

"Who threatens them?"

"Will you listen to me now?"

"Forever, Marchioness."

"Without interrupting me?"

"Speak!"

"Well, this morning Marguerite sent for me."

"And what did she want with you?"

"'I dare not see M. Fouquet myself,' said she."

"Bah! why should she think I would reproach her? Poor woman! she vastly deceives herself."

"'See him yourself,' said she, 'and tell him to beware of M. Colbert.'"

"What! she warned me to beware of her lover?"

"I have told you she still loves you."

"Go on, Marchioness!"

"'M. Colbert,' she added, 'came to me two hours ago, to inform me he was appointed intendant.'"

"I have already told you, Marchioness, that M. Colbert would only be the more in my power for that."

"Yes, but that is not all; Marguerite is intimate, as you know, with Madame d'Eymeris and Madame Lyodot."

"I know she is."

"Well, M. Colbert put many questions to her relative to the fortunes of those two gentlemen, and as to the degree of devotion they bear you."

"Oh, as for those two, I can answer for them; they must be killed before they can cease to be mine."

"Then, as Madame Vanel was obliged to leave M.

Colbert for an instant to receive a visitor, and as M. Colbert is industrious, scarcely was the new intendant left alone, before he took a pencil from his pocket, and, as there was paper on the table, began to make pencil-notes."

"Notes concerning D'Eymeris and Lyodot?"

"Exactly."

"I am curious to know what those notes were about."

"And that is just what I have brought you."

"Madame Vanel has taken Colbert's notes and sent them to me?"

"No; but by a chance which resembles a miracle, she has a duplicate of those notes."

"How could she get that?"

"Listen! I told you that Colbert found some paper on the table"

"Yes."

"That he had taken a pencil from his pocket."

"Yes."

"And had written upon that paper."

"Yes."

"Well, this pencil was a lead-pencil, consequently hard; so it marked in black upon the first sheet, and left its impression upon the second."

"Go on!"

"Colbert, when tearing off the first sheet, took no notice of the second."

"Well?"

"Well, on the second could be read what had been written on the first; Madame Vanel read it, and sent for me."

"Ah!"

"Then, when she was assured that I was your devoted friend, she gave me the paper and told me the secret of this house."

"And this paper?" said Fouquet, with some degree of agitation.

"Here it is, Monsieur; read it!" said the Marchioness.

Fouquet read: —

"Names of the farmers of the revenue to be condemned by the Chamber of Justice: D'Eymeris, friend of M. F; Lyodot, friend of M. F.; De Vanin, indif."

"D'Eymeris and Lyodot!" cried Fouquet, re-reading.

"'Friends of M. F.,'" said the marchioness, pointing at the same time to the paper.

"But what is the meaning of these words, 'To be condemned by the Chamber of Justice'?"

"That is clear enough, I think," said the marchioness. "Besides, that is not all. Read on, read on!"

Fouquet continued: —

"The first two to death; the third to be dismissed, with Messieurs d'Hautemont and de la Valette, whose property will be confiscated."

"Great God!" cried Fouquet, "to death, to death! Lyodot and D'Eymeris! But even if the Chamber of Justice should condemn them to death, the king will never ratify their condemnation, and they cannot be executed without the king's signature."

"The king has made M. Colbert intendant."

"Oh!" cried Fouquet, as if he caught a glimpse of a yawning abyss beneath his feet, "impossible! impossible! But who passed a pencil over the marks made by Colbert?"

"I did. I was afraid the first would be effaced."

"Oh! I will know all."

"You will know nothing, Monsieur; you despise your enemy too much for that."

"Pardon me, my dear marchioness, excuse me; yes, M. Colbert is my enemy, I believe it; yes, M. Colbert is a man to be dreaded, I admit. But I — I have time; and as you are here, as you have assured me of your devotion, as you have allowed me to hope for your love, as we are alone — "

"I came here to save you, M. Fouquet, and not to ruin myself," said the marchioness, rising; "therefore beware! — "

"Marchioness, in truth you alarm yourself too much; at least, unless this alarm is but a pretext — "

"He has a deep heart, that M. Colbert; beware!"

Fouquet, in his turn, drew himself up. "And I?" asked he.

"Oh! you, — you have only a noble heart. Beware!"

"So?"

"I have done what I ought, my friend, at the risk of losing my reputation. Adieu!"

"Not adieu; *au revoir!*"

"Perhaps," said the marchioness, giving her hand to Fouquet to kiss, and walking towards the door with so firm a step that he did not dare to bar her passage.

As for Fouquet, he retraced, with head hanging down and a cloud over his brow, the path of the subterranean passage along which ran the metal wires that communicated from one house to the other, transmitting, through two mirrors, the wishes and signals of two correspondents.

CHAPTER LV.

THE ABBÉ FOUQUET.

Fouquet hastened back to his apartment by the subterranean passage, and immediately closed the mirror with the spring. He was scarcely in his office, when he heard some one knocking violently at the door, and a well-known voice crying, —

"Open the door, Monseigneur! I entreat you open the door!"

Fouquet quickly restored a little order to everything which might reveal either his absence or his agitation; he spread his papers over the desk, took up a pen, and, to gain time, said, through the closed door, "Who are you?"

"What! Monseigneur, do you not know me?" replied the voice.

"Yes," said Fouquet to himself, — "yes, my friend, I know you well enough." And then aloud: "Is it not Gourville?"

"Why, yes, Monseigneur."

Fouquet rose, darted a last look at one of his mirrors, went to the door, pushed the bolt; and Gourville entered.

"Ah, Monseigneur! Monseigneur!" said he, "what cruelty!"

"In what?"

"I have been a quarter of an hour imploring you to open the door, and you would not even answer me."

"Once for all, you know well that I will not be dis

turbed when I am busy. Now, although I might make you an exception, Gourville, I insist upon my orders being respected by others."

"Monseigneur, at this moment, orders, doors, bolts, and walls, — I could have broken, overthrown, and split them all!"

"Ah! it relates to some great event, then?" asked Fouquet.

"Oh, I assure you it does, Monseigneur!" replied Gourville.

"And what is this event?" said Fouquet, a little troubled by the agitation of his most intimate confidant.

"There is a secret Chamber of Justice instituted, Monseigneur."

"I know there is; but do the members meet, Gourville?"

"They not only meet, but they have passed a sentence, Monseigneur."

"A sentence!" said the superintendent, with a shudder and pallor which he could not conceal. "A sentence! — and against whom?"

"Against two of your friends."

"Lyodot and D'Eymeris, do you mean? But what sort of a sentence?"

"Sentence of death."

"Passed? Oh, you must be mistaken, Gourville! that is impossible."

"Here is a copy of the sentence which the king is to sign to-day, if he has not already signed it."

Fouquet seized the paper eagerly, read it, and returned it to Gourville. "The king will never sign that," said he.

Gourville shook his head. "Monseigneur, M. Colbert is a bold councillor; do not trust to that."

"M. Colbert again!" cried Fouquet. "How is it that that name comes upon all occasions to torment my ears,

during the last two or three days? You make so trifling a subject of too much importance, Gourville. Let M. Colbert appear, I will face him; let him raise his head, I will crush him; but you understand, there must be an outline upon which my look may fall, there must be a surface upon which my feet may be placed."

"Patience, Monseigneur! for you do not know what Colbert is. Study him quickly; it is with this dark financier as it is with meteors, which the eye never sees completely before their disastrous rush; when we feel them we are dead."

"That is going too far, Gourville," replied Fouquet, smiling; "allow me, my friend, not to be so easily frightened. M. Colbert a meteor! *Corbleu*, we confront the meteor. Let us see acts, and not words. What has he done?"

"He has ordered two gibbets of the executioner of Paris," answered Gourville, quietly.

Fouquet raised his head, and a flash seemed to strike his eyes. "Are you sure of what you say?" cried he.

"Here is the proof, Monseigneur;" and Gourville held out to the superintendent a note communicated by one of the secretaries of the Hôtel de Ville, who was one of Fouquet's creatures.

"Yes, that is true," murmured the minister; "the scaffold may be prepared, but the king has not signed. Gourville, the king will not sign."

"I will soon know," said Gourville.

"How?"

"If the king has signed, the gibbets will be sent this evening to the Hôtel de Ville, in order to be put up and ready by to-morrow morning."

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Fouquet, once again; "you are all deceived, and deceive me in turn. Lyodot came to

see me only the day before yesterday; only three days ago I received a present of some Syracuse wine from poor D'Eymeris."

"What does that prove?" replied Gourville, "except that the Chamber of Justice has been secretly assembled, has deliberated in the absence of the accused, and that the whole proceeding was finished when they were arrested."

"But are they, then, arrested?"

"No doubt they are."

"But where, when, how have they been arrested?"

"Lyodot, yesterday, at daybreak, D'Eymeris, the day before yesterday, in the evening, as he was returning from the house of his mistress. Their disappearance had disturbed nobody; but M. Colbert all at once raised the mask and caused the affair to be published. It is being cried by sound of trumpet, at this moment, in the streets of Paris; and, in truth, Monseigneur, there is scarcely anybody but yourself ignorant of the event."

Fouquet began to walk about his chamber with an uneasiness that became more and more painful.

"What do you decide upon, Monseigneur?" said Gourville.

"If it really were as you say, I would go to the king," exclaimed Fouquet. "But as I go to the Louvre, I will pass by the Hôtel de Ville. We shall see if the sentence is signed."

"Incredulity! thou art the pest of all great minds," said Gourville, shrugging his shoulders.

"Gourville!"

"Yes," continued he; "and thou ruinest them, as contagion destroys the most robust health, — that is to say, in an instant."

"Let us go," cried Fouquet; "open the door, Gourville!"

"Be cautious!" said the latter; "the Abbé Fouquet is there."

"Ah, my brother!" replied Fouquet, in a tone of annoyance; "he is there, is he? He knows all the ill news, then, and is delighted to bring it to me, as is his custom. The devil! if my brother is there, my affairs are bad, Gourville; why did you not tell me that sooner? I should have been the more readily convinced."

"Monseigneur calumniates him," said Gourville, laughing; "if he has come, it is not with a bad intention."

"What! do you excuse him?" exclaimed Fouquet; "a fellow without a heart, without ideas, a devourer of wealth!"

"He knows you are rich."

"And would ruin me."

"No, but he would like to have your purse; that is all."

"Enough! enough! A hundred thousand crowns per month, during two years. *Corbleu!* it is I that pay, Gourville, and I know my figures." Gourville began to laugh in a silent, sly manner. "Yes, you mean to say it is the king who pays," said the superintendent. "Ah, Gourville, that is a vile joke; this is not the place."

"Monseigneur, do not be angry."

"Well, then, send away the Abbé Fouquet; I have not a sou." Gourville made a step towards the door. "He has been a month without seeing me," continued Fouquet; "why could he not be two months?"

"Because he repents of living in bad company," said Gourville, "and prefers you to all his bandits."

"Thanks for the preference! You make a strange advocate, Gourville, to-day, — the advocate of the Abbé Fouquet!"

"Eh! but everything and every man has his good side, — his useful side, Monseigneur."

"The bandits whom the abbé keeps in pay and drink have their useful side, have they? Prove me that, if you please."

"Let the circumstance arise, Monseigneur, and you will be very glad to have these bandits at hand."

"You advise me, then, to be reconciled to the abbé?" said Fouquet, ironically.

"I advise you, Monseigneur, not to quarrel with a hundred or a hundred and twenty scapegraces, who by putting their rapiers end to end would form a cordon of steel capable of surrounding three thousand men."

Fouquet darted a searching glance at Gourville, and passing before him, — "That is all very well. — Let M. l'Abbé Fouquet be introduced," said he to the footman. "You are right, Gourville."

Two minutes after, the abbé appeared in the doorway, with profound reve-ences. He was a man of from forty to forty-five years of age, half churchman, half soldier, — a brawler grafted upon an abbé; upon seeing that he had not a sword by his side, you might be sure he had pistols. Fouquet saluted him as an elder brother rather than as a minister.

"What can I do to serve you, Monsieur the Abbé?" said he.

"How you speak that to me, Brother!"

"I speak it like a man who is in a hurry, Monsieur."

The abbé looked maliciously at Gourville, and anxiously at Fouquet, and said, "I have three hundred pistoles to pay to M. de Bregi this evening, — a play debt, a sacred debt."

"And what else?" said Fouquet, bravely; for he knew that the Abbé Fouquet would not have disturbed him for such a trifle.

"A thousand to my butcher, who will supply no more."

"What more?"

"Twelve hundred to my tailor," continued the abbé; "the fellow has made me take back seven suits of my people's, which compromises my livery. And my mistress talks of replacing me with a farmer of the revenue, which would be a humiliation for the Church."

"What else is there?" said Fouquet.

"You will please to remark," said the abbé, humbly, "that I have asked nothing for myself."

"That is considerate, Monsieur," replied Fouquet; "so, as you see, I am waiting."

"And I ask nothing, oh, no! but it is not because I need nothing, I assure you."

The minister reflected a minute. "Twelve hundred pistoles to the tailor; that seems a great deal for clothes," said he.

"I maintain a hundred men," said the abbé, proudly; "that is a burden, I believe."

"Why a hundred men?" said Fouquet. "Are you a Richelieu or a Mazarin, to require a hundred men as a guard? What use do you make of these hundred men? Speak! say!"

"And do you ask me that?" cried the Abbé Fouquet. "Ah! how can you put such a question, — why I maintain a hundred men? Ah!"

"Why, yes, I do put that question to you. What have you to do with a hundred men? Answer!"

"Ingrate!" continued the abbé, more and more affected.

"Explain yourself."

"Why, Monsieur the Superintendent, I only want one *valet de chambre*, for my part, and even if I were alone, could help myself very well; but you, — you who have so many enemies, — a hundred men are not enough for me

to defend you with. A hundred men! — you ought to have ten thousand. I maintain, then, all these men in order that in public places, in assemblies, no voice may be raised against you; and without them, Monsieur, you would be loaded with imprecations, you would be torn to pieces, you would not last a week, — no, not a week; do you hear?"

"Ah! I did not know you were my champion to such an extent, Monsieur the Abbé."

"You doubt it!" cried the abbé. "Listen, then, to what happened not longer ago than yesterday in the Rue de la Huchette. A man was cheapening a fowl."

"Well, how could that injure me, Abbé?"

"In this way. The fowl was not fat. The purchaser refused to give eighteen sous for it, saying that he could not afford eighteen sous for the skin of a fowl of which M. Fouquet had had all the fat."

"Go on!"

"The joke caused a deal of laughter," continued the abbé, — "laughter at your expense, death to all the devils! and the rabble crowded around. The joker added, 'Give me a fowl fed by M. Colbert, if you like, and I will pay all you ask;' and immediately there was a clapping of hands. A frightful scandal, you understand, — a scandal which forces a brother to hide his face."

Fouquet colored. "And you hid it?" said the superintendent.

"No; for it so happened I had one of my men in the crowd, — a new recruit from the provinces, one M. de Menneville, whom I like very much. He made his way through the press, saying to the joker: 'By the thousand beards! Monsieur false joker, here's a thrust for Colbert!' 'And one for Fouquet,' replied the joker. Upon which they drew, in front of the cook's shop, with a hedge

of the curious round them, and five hundred as curious at the windows."

"Well?" said Fouquet.

"Well, Monsieur, my Menneville spitted the joker, to the great amazement of the spectators, and said to the cook, 'Take this goose, my friend; it is fatter than your fowl.' That is the way, Monsieur," ended the abbé, triumphantly, "in which I spend my revenues; I maintain the honor of the family, Monsieur." Fouquet hung his head. "And I have a hundred as good as he," pursued the abbé.

"Very well," said Fouquet; "give your account to Gourville, and remain here this evening."

"Shall we have supper?"

"Yes, there will be supper."

"But the chest is closed."

"Gourville will open it for you. Leave us, Monsieur the Abbé, leave us."

"Then we are friends," said the abbé, with a bow.

"Oh, yes! friends. — Come, Gourville!"

"Are you going out? You will not sup, then?"

"I shall be back in an hour; never fear, Abbé." Then, aside to Gourville, "Let them harness my English horses," said he, "and direct the coachman to stop at the Hôtel de Ville de Paris."

CHAPTER LVI.

M. DE LA FONTAINE'S WINE.

CARRIAGES were already bringing Fouquet's guests to St. Mandé, already the whole household were animated with the preparations for supper, when the superintendent launched his fleet horses upon the road to Paris; and going by the quays in order to meet with fewer people on his route, he reached the Hôtel de Ville. It wanted a quarter to eight. Fouquet alighted at the corner of the Rue de Long-pont, and on foot directed his course towards the Place de Grève, accompanied by Gourville. At the turning into the Place, they saw a man dressed in black and violet, of good mien, who was preparing to get into a hired carriage, and was telling the coachman to stop at Vincennes. He had before him a large hamper filled with bottles, which he had just purchased at the pot-house with the sign of "L'Image de Notre-Dame."

"Eh! but that is Vatel, my steward!" said Fouquet to Gourville.

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied the latter.

"What can he have been doing at the sign of L'Image de Notre-Dame?"

"Buying wine, no doubt."

"What! buy wine for me at a pot-house!" said Fouquet. "My cellar, then, must be in a miserable condition!" and he advanced towards the steward, who was arranging his bottles in the carriage with the minutest care.

"Hollos, Vatel!" said he, in the voice of a master.

"Take care, Monseigneur!" said Gourville; "you will be recognized."

"Well! Of what consequence? — Vatel!"

The man dressed in black and violet turned round. He had a mild and good countenance, without expression, — that of a mathematician, less the pride. A certain fire sparkled in the eyes of this personage, a rather sly smile played round his lips; but the observer might soon have noticed that this fire and this smile applied to nothing, enlightened nothing. Vatel laughed like an absent man, and amused himself like a child. At the sound of his master's voice, he turned round, exclaiming, "Oh Monseigneur!"

"Yes, it is I. What the devil are you doing here, Vatel? Wine! You are buying wine at a pot-house in the Place de Grève!"

"But, Monseigneur," said Vatel, quietly, after having darted a hostile glance at Gourville, "why am I interfered with here? Is my cellar kept in bad order?"

"No, Vatel, certainly not; but — "

"But what?" replied Vatel.

Gourville touched the elbow of Fouquet.

"Don't be angry, Vatel; I thought my cellar — your cellar — sufficiently well stocked for us to be able to dispense with having recourse to the Image de Notre-Dame."

"Eh, Monsieur," said Vatel, sinking from Monseigneur to Monsieur with a degree of disdain; "your cellar is so well stocked that when certain of your guests dine with you they have nothing to drink."

Fouquet, in great surprise, looked at Gourville, then at Vatel. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that your butler had not wines for all tastes, Monsieur; and that M. de la Fontaine, M. Pellisson, and M. Conrart do not drink when they come to the house, —

those Messieurs do not like strong wine. What is to be done, then?"

"Well, and so?"

"Well, then, I have found here a *vin de Joigny*, which they like. I know they come once a week to drink at the Image de Notre-Dame. That is the reason why I get this supply."

Fouquet had no more to say; he was almost convinced.

Vatel, on his part, had much more to say, without doubt; and it was plain he was getting warm. "It is just as if you would reproach me, Monseigneur, for going myself to the Rue Planche-Mibray to fetch the cider M. Loret drinks when he comes to dine at your house."

"Loret drinks cider at my house!" exclaimed Fouquet, laughing.

"Certainly he does, Monsieur; and that is the reason why he likes to dine there."

"Vatel," cried Fouquet, grasping the hand of his steward, "you are a man! I thank you, Vatel, for having understood that at my house M. de la Fontaine, M. Conrart, and M. Loret are as great as dukes and peers, as great as princes, greater than myself. Vatel, you are a good servant, and I double your salary."

Vatel did not even thank his master; he merely shrugged his shoulders a little, murmuring this superb sentiment: "To be thanked for having done one's duty is humiliating."

"He is right," said Gourville, as he drew Fouquet's attention, by a gesture, to another point. He showed him a low-built cart, drawn by two horses, upon which rocked two strong gibbets, bound together back to back by chains, while an archer, seated upon the thickness of the post, underwent, as well as he could, with his head bent down, the comments of a hundred vagabonds, who guessed the destination of the gibbets, and were escorting

them to the Hôtel de Ville. Fouquet started. "It is decided, you see," said Gourville.

"But it is not done," replied Fouquet.

"Oh, do not delude yourself, Monseigneur; if they have thus lulled your friendship and your suspicions, — if things have gone so far, you will undo nothing."

"But I have not ratified."

"M. de Lyonne has ratified for you."

"I will go to the Louvre."

"Oh, no, you will not!"

"Would you advise such baseness?" cried Fouquet. "Would you advise me to abandon my friends? Would you advise me, while able to fight, to throw the arms I have in my hand to the ground?"

"I do not advise you to do anything of the kind, Monseigneur. Are you in a position to give up the post of superintendent at this moment?"

"No."

"Well, if the king wishes to displace you —"

"He will displace me absent as well as present."

"Yes, but you will never have insulted him."

"Yes, but I shall have been base. Now, I am not willing that my friends should die; and they shall not die!"

"For that is it necessary you should go to the Louvre?"

"Gourville!"

"Beware! once at the Louvre, you will be forced to defend your friends openly, — that is to say, to make a profession of faith; or you will be forced to abandon them irrevocably."

"Never!"

"Pardon me, — the king will propose the alternative to you imperatively, or else you will propose it to him yourself."

"That is true."

"That is the reason why conflict must be avoided. Let us return to St. Mandé, Monseigneur."

"Gourville, I will not stir from this place, where the crime is to be carried out, where my disgrace is to be accomplished; I will not stir, I say, till I have found some means of combating my enemies."

"Monseigneur," replied Gourville, "you would excite my pity, if I did not know you to be one of the great spirits of this world. You possess a hundred and fifty millions; you are equal to the king in position, and a hundred and fifty millions his superior in money. M. Colbert has not even had the wit to have the will of Mazarin accepted. Now, when a man is the richest person in a kingdom, and will take the trouble to spend money, if that be done which he does not like, it is because he is a poor man. Let us return to St. Mandé, I tell you."

"To consult with Pellisson? We will."

"No, Monseigneur; to count your money."

"So be it!" said Fouquet, with his eyes inflamed. "Yes, yes, to St. Mandé!"

He got into his carriage again, and Gourville with him. Upon their road, at the end of the Faubourg St. Antoine, they overtook the humble equipage of Vatel, who was quietly conveying his *vin de Joigny*. The black horses, going at a swift pace, alarmed, as they passed, the timid hack of the steward, who, putting his head out at the window, cried, in a fright, "Look out for my bottles!"

CHAPTER LVII.

THE GALLERY OF ST. MANDÉ.

Fifty persons were waiting for the superintendent. He did not even take the time to place himself in the hands of his *valet de chambre* for a minute, but from the vestibule went straight into the first drawing-room. There his friends were assembled in full chat. The steward was waiting to order supper to be served, but, above all, the Abbé Fouquet was watching for his brother's return, and was endeavoring to do the honors of the house in his absence. Upon the arrival of the superintendent, a murmur of joy and affection was heard: Fouquet, full of affability, good humor, and munificence, was beloved by his poets, his artists, and his men of business. His brow, upon which his little court read, as upon that of a god, all the movements of his soul, and thence drew rules of conduct, — his brow, upon which affairs of State never impressed a wrinkle, was this evening paler than usual, and more than one friendly eye remarked that paleness. Fouquet placed himself at the centre of the table, and presided gayly during supper. He told about Vatel's expedition to La Fontaine; he related the history of Menneville and the thin fowl to Pellisson, in such a manner that all the table heard it. A tempest of laughter and jokes ensued, which was only checked by a serious and even sad gesture from Pellisson.

The Abbé Fouquet, not being able to comprehend why his brother should have led the conversation in that

direction, listened with all his ears, and sought in the countenance of Gourville, or in that of his brother, an explanation which neither afforded him.

Pellisson took up the matter. "Did they mention M. Colbert, then?" said he.

"Why not," replied Fouquet, "if it be true, as it is said to be, that the king has made him his intendant?"

Scarcely had Fouquet uttered these words, pronounced with a marked intention, when an explosion broke forth among the guests.

"The miser!" said one.

"The mean, pitiful fellow!" said another.

"The hypocrite!" said a third.

Pellisson exchanged a meaning look with Fouquet. "Messieurs," said he, "in truth we are abusing a man whom no one knows, — that is neither charitable nor reasonable; and here is Monsieur the Superintendent, who, I am sure, agrees with me."

"Entirely," replied Fouquet. "Let M. Colbert's fat fowls alone; our business to-day is with M. Vatel's truffled pheasants."

This speech dispelled the dark cloud which was beginning to throw its shade over the guests. Gourville succeeded so well in animating the poets with the *vin de Joigny*, and the abbé, intelligent as a man who stands in need of another's gold-pieces, so enlivened the financiers and men of the sword, that, amid the vapors of this joy and the noise of conversation the subject of uneasiness disappeared completely. The will of Cardinal Mazarin was the text of the conversation at the second course and dessert; then Fouquet ordered dishes of preserved fruit and fountains of liqueurs to be carried into the hall adjoining the gallery. He led the way thither, conducting by the hand a lady, — the queen, by his

preference, of the evening. The musicians then took their supper; and promenading in the gallery and in the garden began, beneath a spring sky, amid mild and perfumed breezes.

Pellisson then approached the superintendent, and said, "Something troubles Monseigneur?"

"Greatly," replied the minister; "ask Gourville to tell you what it is."

Pellisson, on turning round, found La Fontaine treading upon his heels. He was obliged to listen to a Latin verse which the poet had composed upon Vatel. La Fontaine had for an hour been scanning this verse in every corner, seeking some one to pour it out upon advantageously. He thought he had caught Pellisson, but the latter escaped him; he turned towards Loret, who had himself just composed a quatrain in honor of the supper and the host. La Fontaine in vain endeavored to dispose of his verses; Loret wanted to obtain a hearing for his quatrain. He was obliged to retire before M. le Comte de Chanost, whose arm Fouquet had just taken. The Abbé Fouquet perceived that the poet, as absent as usual, was about to follow the two talkers; and he interposed. La Fontaine seized upon him, and recited his verses. The abbé, who did not know Latin, nodded his head, in cadence, at every roll which La Fontaine imparted to his body, according to the undulations of the dactyls and spondees. While this was going on behind the fruit-dishes, Fouquet related the event of the day to his son-in-law, M. de Chanost.

"We must send the idle and useless to look at the fireworks," said Pellisson to Gourville, "while we converse here."

"So be it," said Gourville, addressing four words to Vatel.

The latter then led towards the gardens the greater part of the beaux, the ladies, and the chatterers; while the men walked in the gallery, lighted by three hundred wax-lights, in the sight of all the admirers of fireworks, who were running off to the garden. Gourville approached Fouquet, and said, "Monsieur, we are all here."

"All?" said Fouquet.

"Yes; count!"

The superintendent turned and counted; there were eight persons. Pellisson and Gourville walked arm in arm, as if conversing upon indifferent subjects. Loret and two officers imitated them, going in an opposite direction. The Abbé Fouquet walked alone. Fouquet, with M. de Chanost, walked as if entirely absorbed by the conversation of his son-in-law. "Messieurs," said he, "let no one of you raise his head as he walks, or appear to pay attention to me; continue walking. We are alone; listen to me!"

A complete silence ensued, disturbed only by the distant cries of the happy guests, from the groves whence they beheld the fireworks. It was an odd spectacle this, that of these men walking in groups, as if each one were occupied about something, while lending attention really to only one among them, who himself seemed to be speaking only to his companion.

"Messieurs," said Fouquet, "you have, without doubt, noticed the absence of two of my friends this evening, who were with us on Wednesday. For God's sake, Abbé, do not stop, — it is not necessary, to enable you to listen; walk on, carrying your head in a natural way; and as you have an excellent sight, place yourself at the open window, and if any one returns towards the gallery, give us notice by coughing." The abbé obeyed.

"I have not remarked the absent," said Pellisson, who at this moment was turning his back to Fouquet, and walking the other way.

"I do not see M. Lyodot," said Loret, "who pays me my pension."

"And I," said the abbé, at the window, "do not see M. d'Eymeris, who owes me eleven hundred livres from our last game at brelan."

"Loret," continued Fouquet, walking bent and gloomily, "you will never receive your pension any more from Lyodot; and you, Abbé, will never be paid your eleven hundred livres by D'Eymeris: for both are about to die."

"To die!" exclaimed the whole assembly, stopped, in spite of themselves, in the scene they were playing, by that terrible word.

"Recover yourselves, Messieurs," said Fouquet; "for perhaps we are watched: I said, to die!"

"To die!" repeated Pellisson; "what! the men I saw not six days ago, full of health, gayety, and confidence! What, then, is man, good God! that disease should thus bring him down all at once?"

"It is not a disease," said Fouquet.

"Then there is a remedy," said Loret.

"No remedy. Messieurs Lyodot and d'Eymeris are on the eve of their last day."

"Of what are these gentlemen dying, then?" asked an officer.

"Ask of him who kills them," replied Fouquet.

"Who kills them? Are they being killed, then?" cried the terrified chorus.

"They do better still; they are hanging them," murmured Fouquet, in a sinister voice, which sounded like a funeral knell in that rich gallery, splendid with pictures,

flowers, velvet, and gold. Involuntarily every one stopped; the abbé left his window; the first rockets of the fireworks began to mount above the tops of the trees. A prolonged shout from the gardens attracted the superintendent to enjoy the spectacle. He drew near to a window, and his friends placed themselves behind him, attentive to his least wish. "Messieurs," said he, "M. Colbert has caused to be arrested, has tried, and will execute my two friends; what does it become me to do?"

"*Mordioux!*" exclaimed the abbé, the first to speak; "run M. Colbert through the body."

"Monseigneur," said Pellisson, "you must speak to his Majesty."

"The king, my dear Pellisson, has signed the order for the execution."

"Well!" said the Comte de Chanost, "the execution must not take place, then; that is all."

"Impossible!" said Gourville, "unless we could corrupt the jailers."

"Or the governor," said Fouquet.

"This night the prisoners might be allowed to escape."

"Which of you will undertake the transaction?"

"I," said the abbé, "will carry the money."

"And I," said Pellisson, "will carry the message."

"Words and money," said Fouquet: "five hundred thousand livres to the governor of the *conciergerie*, that is sufficient; nevertheless, it shall be a million, if necessary."

"A million!" cried the abbé; "why, for less than that, I would cause the half of Paris to be sacked."

"There must be no disorder," said Pellisson. "The governor being won over, the two prisoners will escape; once clear of the fangs of the law, they will call together the enemies of Colbert, and prove to the king

that his young justice, like all other exaggerations, is not infallible."

"Go to Paris, then, Pellisson," said Fouquet, "and bring hither the two victims; to-morrow we shall see. — Gourville, give Pellisson the five hundred thousand livres."

"Take care the wind does not carry you away!" said the abbé. "What a responsibility! Let me help you a little."

"Silence!" said Fouquet, "somebody is coming. Ah! the fireworks are producing a magical effect."

At this moment a shower of sparks fell rustling among the branches of the neighboring trees. Pellisson and Gourville went out together by the door of the gallery; Fouquet descended with the others to the garden.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE EPICUREANS.

WHILE Fouquet was giving, or appearing to give, all his attention to the brilliant illuminations, the languishing music of the violins and hautboys, the sparkling sheaves of fireworks, which, inflaming the heavens with glowing reflections, marked behind the trees the dark profile of the donjon of Vincennes, — while, we say, the superintendent was smiling on the ladies and the poets, the *fête* was not less gay than ordinary; and Vatel, whose restless, even jealous, look earnestly consulted the eye of Fouquet, did not appear dissatisfied with the reception given to the ordering of the evening's entertainment.

The fireworks over, the company dispersed about the gardens and beneath the marble porticos, with that careless freedom which shows in the master of the house such forgetfulness of greatness, courteous hospitality, and magnificent unconcern. The poets wandered about, arm in arm, through the groves; some reclined upon beds of moss, to the great detriment of velvet clothes and curled heads, into which little dried leaves and blades of grass insinuated themselves. The ladies, in small numbers, listened to the songs of the singers and the verses of the poets; others listened to the prose, spoken with much art, of men who were neither actors nor poets, but to whom youth and solitude gave an unaccustomed eloquence, which appeared to them preferable to all.

"Why," said La Fontaine, "does not our master

Epicurus descend into the garden? Epicurus never abandoned his pupils; the master is wrong."

"Monsieur," said Conrart, "you are very wrong in persisting to claim the name of an Epicurean; indeed, nothing here reminds me of the doctrine of the philosopher of Gargetta."

"Bah!" said La Fontaine, "is it not written that Epicurus purchased a large garden, and lived in it tranquilly with his friends?"

"That is true."

"Well, has not M. Fouquet purchased a large garden at St. Mandé, and do we not live here very tranquilly with him and his friends?"

"Yes, without doubt. Unfortunately, it is neither the garden nor the friends which can make the resemblance. Now, what likeness is there between the doctrine of Epicurus and that of M. Fouquet?"

"This, — pleasure gives happiness."

"Next."

"Well, I do not think we ought to consider ourselves unfortunate, — for my part, at least. A good repast, — *vin de Joigny*, which they have the delicacy to go and fetch for me from my favorite public-house; not one impertinence heard during a supper of an hour long, in spite of the presence of ten millionnaires and twenty poets!"

"Stop there! You mentioned *vin de Joigny* and a good repast; do you persist in that?"

"I persist, — *anteco*, as they say at Port Royal."

"Then please to recollect that the great Epicurus lived, and made his pupils live, upon bread, vegetables, and clear water."

"That is not certain," said La Fontaine; "and you may be confounding Epicurus with Pythagoras, my dear Conrart."

"Remember, likewise, that the ancient philosopher was rather a bad friend of the gods and the magistrates."

"Oh, I cannot admit that," replied La Fontaine. "Epicurus was like M. Fouquet."

"Do not compare him to Monsieur the Superintendent," said Conrart, in an agitated voice, "or you would accredit the reports which are circulated concerning him and us."

"What reports?"

"That we are bad Frenchmen, lukewarm with regard to the monarch, deaf to the law."

"I return, then, to my text," said La Fontaine. "Listen, Conrart! This is the morality of Epicurus, whom, besides, I consider, if I must tell you so, a myth. All which touches the least upon antiquity is a myth. Jupiter, if we give a little attention to it, is life. Alcides is strength. The words are there to bear me out: 'Zeus,' that is *zen*, to live; 'Alcides,' that is *alce*, vigor. Well, 'Epicurus;' that is mild watchfulness, that is protection. Now, who watches better over the State, or who protects individuals better, than M. Fouquet?"

"You talk etymology, and not morality; I say that we modern Epicureans are troublesome citizens."

"Oh!" exclaimed La Fontaine, "if we become troublesome citizens, it will not be in following the maxims of our master. Listen to one of his principal aphorisms, — 'Wish for good leaders.'"

"Well?"

"Well, what does M. Fouquet say to us every day? 'When shall we be governed?' Does he say so? Come, Conrart, be frank!"

"He says so, certainly."

"Well, that is a doctrine of Epicurus."

"Yes; but that is a little seditious, observe."

"How?—seditious to wish to be governed by good leaders?"

"Certainly, when those who govern are bad."

"Patience! I have a reply for all."

"Even for that I have just said to you?"

"Listen! 'Would you submit to those who govern ill?' Oh! it is written: *Cacos politeuousi.* You grant me the text?"

"*Pardieu!* I think so. Do you know that you speak Greek as well as Æsop did, my dear La Fontaine?"

"Is there any wickedness in that, my dear Conrart?"

"God forbid!"

"Then let us return to M. Fouquet. What did he repeat to us all day long? Was it not this: 'What a vulgar pedant is that Mazarin! what an ass! what a leech! We must, however, submit to the fellow!' Now, Conrart, did he say so, or did he not?"

"I confess that he said it, and even perhaps too often."

"Like Epicurus, my friend, still like Epicurus. I repeat, we are Epicureans; and that is very amusing."

"Yes; but I am afraid there will rise up, by the side of us, a sect like that of Epictetus. You know him well,—the philosopher of Hieropolis,—he who called bread luxury, vegetables prodigality, and clear water drunkenness; he who being beaten by his master, said to him, grumbling a little it is true, but without being very angry, 'I will lay a wager you have broken my leg!' and he won his wager."

"He was a gosling, that Epictetus!"

"Granted; but he might easily become the fashion by only changing his name into that of Colbert."

"Bah!" replied La Fontaine, "that is impossible; never will you find Colbert in Epictetus."

"You are right; I shall find — *Coluber* [serpent] there, at the most."

"Ah! you are beaten, Conrart; you are reduced to a play upon words. M. Arnault pretends that I have no logic; I have more than M. Nicolle."

"Yes," retorted Conrart; "you have logic, but you are a Jansenist."

This argument was hailed by an immense shout of laughter. By degrees the promenaders had been attracted by the exclamations of the two quibblers around the arbor under which they were arguing. All the discussion had been listened to with religious silence; and Fouquet himself, scarcely able to suppress his laughter, had given an example of moderation. But the *dénouement* of the scene threw off all restraint; he laughed aloud. Everybody laughed as he did, and the two philosophers received unanimous felicitations. La Fontaine, however, was declared conqueror, on account of his profound erudition and his irrefragable logic. Conrart obtained the compensation due to an unsuccessful combatant, — he was praised for the loyalty of his intentions and the purity of his conscience.

At the moment when this mirth was manifesting itself by the most lively demonstrations, — at the moment when the ladies were reproaching the two adversaries with not having admitted women into the system of Epicurean happiness, — Gourville was seen hastening from the other end of the garden, approaching Fouquet, who surveyed him anxiously, and detaching him, by his presence alone, from the group. The superintendent preserved upon his face the smile and the expression of unconcern; but as soon as they had withdrawn from view he threw off the mask. "Well," said he, eagerly, "where is Pellisson? What is he doing?"

"Pellisson has returned from Paris."

"Has he brought back the prisoners?"

"He has not even seen the *concierge* of the prison."

"What! did he not tell him he came from me?"

"He told him so; but the *concierge* sent him this reply: 'If any one came to me from M. Fouquet, he would have a letter from M. Fouquet.'"

"Oh!" cried the latter, "if a letter is all he wants —"

"Never, Monsieur," said Pellisson, showing himself at the corner of the little wood, "never! Go yourself, and speak in your own name."

"You are right. I will go into the house, as if to work; let the horses remain harnessed, Pellisson. Entertain my friends, Gourville."

"One last word of advice, Monseigneur," replied the latter.

"Speak, Gourville!"

"Do not go to the *concierge* but at the last minute; it is brave, but it is not wise. Excuse me, M. Pellisson, if I am not of the same opinion as you; but believe me, Monseigneur, send again a message to this *concierge*, — he is a worthy man, — but do not carry it yourself."

"I will think of it," said Fouquet; "besides, we have the whole night before us."

"Do not reckon too much upon time; were the time we have double what it is, it would not be too much," replied Pellisson. "It is never a fault to arrive too soon."

"Adieu!" said the superintendent. "Come with me, Pellisson! Gourville, I commend my guests to your care;" and he set off. The Epicureans did not perceive that the head of the school had disappeared; the violins continued playing all night.

CHAPTER LIX.

A QUARTER OF AN HOUR'S DELAY.

FOUQUET, on leaving his house for the second time that day, felt less heavy and less disturbed than might have been expected. He turned towards Pellisson, who was gravely meditating in the corner of the carriage some good arguments against the violent proceedings of Colbert.

"My dear Pellisson," said Fouquet, "it is a great pity you are not a woman."

"I think, on the contrary, it is very fortunate," replied Pellisson; "for, Monseigneur, I am excessively ugly."

"Pellisson! Pellisson!" said the superintendent, laughing, "you repeat so often that you are ugly, that you may lead people to believe it gives you much pain."

"In fact it does, Monseigneur, much. There is no man more unfortunate than I. I was handsome; the small-pox rendered me hideous; I am deprived of a great means of seduction. Now I am your chief clerk, or something of that sort. I take great interest in your affairs; and if at this moment I were a pretty woman, I could render you an important service."

"What?"

"I would go and find the *concierge* of the Palais. I would seduce him, — for he is a gallant man, extravagantly fond of women; then I would get away our two prisoners."

"I hope to be able to do so myself, although I am not a pretty woman," replied Fouquet.

"Granted, Monseigneur; but you are compromising yourself greatly."

"Oh!" cried Fouquet, suddenly, with one of those secret transports which the generous blood of youth or the remembrance of some sweet emotion infuses into the heart,—"oh! I know a woman who will enact the personage we stand in need of with the lieutenant-governor of the *conciergerie*."

"And on my part I know fifty, Monseigneur,—fifty strumpets, who will inform the universe of your generosity, of your devotion to your friends, and consequently will ruin you sooner or later while ruining themselves."

"I do not speak of such women, Pellisson. I speak of a noble and beautiful creature who joins to the intelligence and wit of her sex the worth and coolness of ours; I speak of a woman handsome enough to make the walls of a prison bow down to salute her, of a woman discreet enough to let no one suspect by whom she has been sent."

"A treasure!" said Pellisson; "you would make a famous present to Monsieur the governor of the *conciergerie! Peste!* Monseigneur, he might have his head cut off,—that might happen; but he would, before dying, have had such happiness as man never enjoyed before him."

"And I add," said Fouquet, "that the *concierge* of the Palais would not have his head cut off; for he would receive of me my horses to effect his escape, and five hundred thousand livres wherewith to live comfortably in England. I add that this woman, my friend, would give him nothing but the horses and the money. Let us go and seek this woman, Pellisson."

The superintendent reached forth his hand towards the

gold and silken cord placed inside his carriage, but Pellisson stopped him. "Monseigneur," said he, "you are going to lose as much time in seeking this woman as Columbus took to discover the new world. Now, we have but two hours in which we can possibly succeed; the *concierge* once gone to bed, how shall we get at him without making a disturbance? When daylight dawns, how can we conceal our proceedings? Go, Monseigneur, go yourself, and do not seek either woman or angel to-night."

"But, my dear Pellisson, here we are before her door."

"What! before the angel's door?"

"Why, yes."

"This is the hotel of Madame de Bellière!"

"Hush!"

"Ah! Good Lord!" exclaimed Pellisson.

"What have you to say against her?" demanded Fouquet.

"Nothing, alas! and it is that which makes me despair. Nothing, absolutely nothing. Why can I not, on the contrary, say ill enough of her to prevent your going to her?"

But Fouquet had already given orders to stop, and the carriage was motionless. "Prevent me!" cried Fouquet; "why, no power on earth should prevent my going to pay my compliments to Madame de Plessis-Bellière; besides, who knows that we shall not stand in need of her? Will you go in with me?"

"No, Monseigneur, no!"

"But I do not wish you to wait for me, Pellisson," replied Fouquet, with sincere courtesy.

"The greater reason why I should, Monseigneur; knowing that you are keeping me waiting, you will perhaps stay a shorter time. Take care! You see there is a carriage in the courtyard; she has some one with her."

Fouquet leaned towards the step of the carriage. "One word more," cried Pellisson; "do not go to this lady till you have been to the *conciergerie*, for heaven's sake!"

"Eh! five minutes, Pellisson," replied Fouquet, alighting at the steps of the hotel, leaving Pellisson in the carriage in a very ill humor.

Fouquet ran upstairs, told his name to the footman, which excited an eagerness and a respect that showed the habit the mistress of the house had of honoring that name in her family.

"Monsieur the Superintendent," exclaimed the marchioness, advancing, very pale, to meet him; "what an honor! what an unexpected pleasure!" said she. Then in a low voice, "Take care! Marguerite Vanel is here!"

"Madame," replied Fouquet, rather agitated, "I came upon business. One single word, in haste, if you please!" and he entered the salon.

Madame Vanel had risen, more pale, more livid, than Envy herself. Fouquet in vain addressed her with the most agreeable, most pacific salutation; she only replied by a terrible glance darted at the marchioness and Fouquet. This keen glance of a jealous woman is a stiletto which pierces every cuirass; Marguerite Vanel plunged it straight into the hearts of the two confidants. She made a courtesy to *her friend*, a more profound one to Fouquet, and took leave, under pretence of having a great number of visits to make, without the marchioness, or M. Fouquet, each a prey to anxiety, trying to prevent her. She was scarcely out of the room, and Fouquet left alone with the marchioness, when he threw himself on his knees without saying a word.

"I expected you," said the marchioness, with a tender sigh.

"Oh, no," cried he, "or you would have sent away that woman."

"She has been here scarcely a quarter of an hour, and I had no suspicion she would come this evening."

"You do love me a little, then, Marchioness?"

"That is not the question now, Monsieur; it is of your danger. How are your affairs going on?"

"I am going this evening to get my friends out of the Palais prisons."

"How will you do that?"

"By buying and seducing the governor."

"He is a friend of mine; can I assist you without injuring you?"

"Oh, Marchioness, it would be a signal service; but how can you be employed without being compromised? Now, never shall my life, my power, or even my liberty be purchased at the expense of a single tear from your eyes, or of a single pain to your heart!"

"Monseigneur, speak no more such words! They bewilder me. I am culpable in having wished to serve you without foreseeing how far my advances might lead. I love you, in reality, as a tender friend, and as a friend I am grateful for your delicate attentions; but, alas! alas! you will never find a mistress in me."

"Marchioness!" cried Fouquet, in a tone of despair, "why not?"

"Because you are too much beloved," said the young woman, in a low voice; "because you are too much beloved by too many people; because the splendor of glory and fortune wound my eyes, while the darkness of sorrow attracts them; because, in short, I, who have repulsed you in your proud magnificence, — I, who scarcely looked at you in your splendor, — I came, like a mad woman, to throw myself as it were into your arms, when

I saw a misfortune hovering over your head. You understand me now, Monseigneur? Become happy again, that I may again become chaste in heart and in thought. Your misfortunes would ruin me!"

"Oh, Madame," said Fouquet, with an emotion he had never before felt, "were I to fall to the last degree of human misery, and should I hear from your mouth that word which you now refuse me, that day, Madame, you will be mistaken in your noble egotism; that day you will fancy you are consoling the most unfortunate of men, and you will have said *I love you* to the most illustrious, the most delighted, the most triumphant of the happy beings of this world."

He was still at her feet, kissing her hand, when Pellisson entered precipitately, exclaiming, in very ill humor, "Monseigneur! Madame! for heaven's sake! excuse me. Monseigneur, you have been here half an hour. Oh, do not both look at me so reproachfully! Madame, pray who is that lady who left your house soon after Monseigneur came in?"

"Madame Vanel," said Fouquet.

"There!" cried Pellisson, "I was sure of it."

"Well! what then?"

"Why, she got into her carriage looking deadly pale."

"Of what consequence is that to me?"

"Yes; but what she said to her coachman is of consequence to you."

"Oh, heavens!" cried the marchioness, "what was that?"

"'To M. Colbert's'!" said Pellisson, in a hoarse voice.

"Good heavens! go, Monseigneur, go!" replied the marchioness, pushing Fouquet out of the salon, while Pellisson dragged him by the hand.

"Am I, then, indeed," said the superintendent, "become a child, to be frightened by a shadow?"

"You are a giant," said the marchioness, "whom a viper is endeavoring to bite on the heel."

Pellisson continued to drag Fouquet on to the carriage.

"To the Palais at full speed!" cried Pellisson to the coachman.

The horses set off like lightning; no obstacle retarded their pace for an instant. Only at the Arcade St. Jean, as they were coming out upon the Place de Grève, a long file of horsemen, barring the narrow passage, stopped the superintendent's carriage. There was no means of forcing this barrier; it was necessary to wait till the mounted archers of the watch — for it was they who stopped the way — had passed with the heavy carriage they were escorting, and which ascended rapidly towards the Place Baudoyer. Fouquet and Pellisson took no further account of this circumstance beyond deploring the minute's delay they had to submit to. They entered the lodge of the *concierge* of the palace five minutes after.

That officer was still walking about in the front court. At the name of Fouquet, whispered in his ear by Pellisson, the governor eagerly approached the carriage, and, hat in hand, was profuse in his obeisances. "What an honor for me, Monseigneur!" said he.

"One word, Monsieur the Governor! Will you take the trouble to get into my carriage?" The officer placed himself opposite Fouquet in the coach. "Monsieur," said Fouquet, "I have a service to ask of you."

"Speak, Monseigneur!"

"A service which will compromise you, Monsieur, but which will assure to you forever my protection and my friendship."

"Were it to cast myself into the fire for you, Monseigneur, I would do it."

"Well," said Fouquet, "what I require is much more simple."

"That being so, Monseigneur, what is it?"

"To conduct me to the chamber of Messieurs Lyodot and d'Eymeris."

"Will Monseigneur have the kindness to say for what purpose?"

"I will tell you in their presence, Monsieur, at the same time that I will give you ample means of palliating this escape."

"Escape! Why, then, Monseigneur does not know?"

"What?"

"That Messieurs Lyodot and d'Eymeris are no longer here."

"Since when?" cried Fouquet, in great agitation.

"About a quarter of an hour."

"Whither have they gone, then?"

"To Vincennes, — to the donjon."

"Who took them from here?"

"An order from the king."

"Oh! woe! woe!" exclaimed Fouquet, striking his forehead; and without saying a single word more to the governor, he threw himself back in his carriage, despair in his heart and death on his countenance.

"Well!" said Pellisson, with great anxiety.

"Our friends are lost. Colbert is conveying them to the donjon. It was they who crossed our passage under the Arcade St. Jean."

Pellisson, struck as with a thunderbolt, made no reply. With a single reproach he would have killed his master.

"Where is Monseigneur going?" inquired the footman.

"Home, to Paris. — You, Pellisson, return to St. Mandé, and bring the Abbé Fouquet to me within an hour. Go!"

CHAPTER LX.

PLAN OF BATTLE.

The night was already far advanced when the Abbé Fouquet joined his brother. Gourville had accompanied him. These three men, pale with apprehension, resembled less three powers of that period than three conspirators, united by one and the same thought of violence.

Fouquet walked back and forth for a long time, with his eyes fixed upon the floor, striking his hands one against the other. At length, taking courage, in the midst of a deep, long sigh, "Abbé," said he, "you were speaking to me, only to-day, of certain people you maintain?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the abbé.

"Tell me precisely who these people are." The abbé hesitated. "Come! no fear, I am not threatening; no romancing, I am not joking."

"Since you demand the truth, Monseigneur, here it is: I have a hundred and twenty friends, or companions of pleasure, who are devoted to me as the thief is to the gallows."

"And you think you can depend upon them?"

"Entirely."

"And you will not compromise yourself?"

"I will not even make my appearance."

"And are they men of resolution?"

"They would burn Paris, if I promised them they should not be burned in turn."

"The thing I ask of you, Abbé," said Fouquet, wiping the sweat which fell from his brow, "is to throw your hundred and twenty men upon the people I will point out to you, at a certain appointed moment. Is it possible?"

"It will not be the first time such a thing has happened to them, Monseigneur."

"That is well; but would these bandits attack an armed force?"

"They are used to that."

"Then get your hundred and twenty men together, Abbé."

"Directly. But where?"

"On the road to Vincennes, to-morrow, at two o'clock, precisely."

"To carry off Lyodot and D'Eymeris? There will be blows to receive!"

"A number, no doubt; are you afraid?"

"Not for myself, but for you."

"Your men will know, then, what they have to do?"

"They are too intelligent not to guess it. Now, a minister who gets up a riot against his king exposes himself—"

"Of what importance is that to you, if I pay for it? Besides, if I fall, you fall with me."

"It would then be more prudent, Monsieur, not to stir in the affair, and leave the king to take this little satisfaction."

"Think well of this, Abbé. Lyodot and D'Eymeris at Vincennes are a prelude of ruin for my house. I repeat it,—I arrested, you will be imprisoned; I imprisoned, you will be exiled."

"Monsieur, I am at your orders; have you any to give me?"

"What I told you,—I wish that, to-morrow, the two

financiers of whom they mean to make victims while there remain so many criminals unpunished, should be snatched from the fury of my enemies. Take your measures accordingly. Is it possible?"

"It is possible."

"Describe your plan."

"It is of rich simplicity. The ordinary guard at executions consists of twelve archers."

"There will be a hundred to-morrow."

"I reckon so. I even say more, — there will be two hundred."

"Then your hundred and twenty men will not be enough."

"Pardon me. In every crowd composed of a hundred thousand spectators, there are ten thousand bandits or cutpurses; only, they dare not take the initiative."

"Well?"

"There will then be, to-morrow, on the Place de Grève, which I choose as my battle-field, ten thousand auxiliaries to my hundred and twenty men. The attack began by the latter, the others will finish it."

"That all appears feasible; but what will be done with regard to the prisoners upon the Place de Grève?"

"This: they must be thrust into some house on the Place, — that will make a siege necessary to get them out again. And stop! here is another idea, more sublime still: some houses have two exits — one upon the Place, and the other into the Rue de la Mortellerie, or de la Vannerie, or de la Tixeranderie. The prisoners, entering by one door, will go out at another."

"Yes; but fix upon something positive."

"I am seeking to do so."

"And I," exclaimed Fouquet, — "I have found it. Listen to what has occurred to me at this moment."

"I am listening."

Fouquet made a sign to Gourville, who appeared to understand. "One of my friends lends me sometimes the keys of a house which he rents, in the Rue Baudoyer, the spacious gardens of which extend behind a certain house of the Place de Grève."

"That is the place for us," said the abbé. "What house?"

"A pot-house, pretty well frequented, whose sign represents the image of Notre-Dame."

"I know it," said the abbé.

"This pot-house has windows opening upon the Place, a place of exit into the court, which must abut upon the gardens of my friend by a door of communication."

"Good!" said the abbé.

"Enter by the pot-house; take the prisoners in; defend the door while you enable them to escape by the garden and the Place Baudoyer."

"That is all plain. Monsieur, you would make an excellent general, like the prince."

"Have you understood me?"

"Perfectly."

"How much will it take to make your bandits all drunk with wine, and to satisfy them with gold?"

"Oh, Monsieur, what an expression! Oh, Monsieur, if they heard you! Some of them are very susceptible."

"I mean to say they must be made no longer to know the heavens from the earth: for I shall to-morrow contend with the king; and when I fight I mean to conquer, — please to understand."

"It shall be done, Monsieur. Give me your other ideas."

"The rest is your business."

"Then give me your purse."

"Gourville, count out a hundred thousand livres for the abbé!"

"Good! and do not be at all sparing, did you not say?"

"You are right."

"So much the better."

"Monseigneur," objected Gourville, "if this should be known, we should lose our heads."

"Eh! Gourville," replied Fouquet, purple with anger, "you excite my pity. Speak for yourself, if you please. My head does not shake in that manner upon my shoulders. Now, Abbé, is everything arranged?"

"Everything."

"At two o'clock to-morrow."

"At twelve, because it will be necessary to prepare our auxiliaries in a secret manner."

"That is true; do not spare the innkeeper's wine."

"I will spare neither his wine nor his house," replied the abbé, with a sneering laugh. "I have my plan, I tell you; leave me to set it in operation, and you shall see."

"Where shall you be yourself?"

"Everywhere; nowhere."

"And how shall I receive information?"

"By a courier, whose horse shall be kept in the very garden of your friend. By the way, the name of your friend?"

Fouquet looked again at Gourville. The latter came to the aid of his master, saying, "Accompany Monsieur the Abbé for several reasons. However, the house is easily found, — the 'Image de Notre-Dame' in the front; a garden, the only one in the quarter, behind."

"Good! good! I will go and give notice to my soldiers."

"Accompany him, Gourville," said Fouquet, "and count him down the money! One moment, Abbé, — one

moment, Gourville, — what name will be given to this carrying off?"

"A very natural one, Monsieur, — the riot."

"The riot on account of what? For if ever the people of Paris are disposed to pay their court to the king, it is when he hangs financiers."

"I will manage that," said the abbé.

"Yes; but you may manage it badly, and people will guess."

"Not at all, not at all. I have another idea."

"What is that?"

"My men shall cry out, 'Colbert! *vive* Colbert!' and shall throw themselves upon the prisoners as if they would tear them in pieces, and shall drag them from the gibbets, as too mild a punishment."

"Ah, that is truly an idea!" said Gourville. "*Peste!* Monsieur the Abbé, what an imagination you have!"

"Monsieur, we are worthy of our family," returned the abbé, proudly.

"Strange fellow!" murmured Fouquet. Then he added: "That is ingenious. Carry it out, but shed no blood."

Gourville and the abbé went off together, with their heads full of the meditated riot. The superintendent lay down upon some cushions, partly thinking over the sinister projects of the morrow, partly dreaming of love.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE POT-HOUSE OF THE IMAGE DE NOTRE-DAME.

At two o'clock the next day fifty thousand spectators had taken their position upon the Place around the two gibbets which had been elevated between the Quai de la Grève and the Quai Pelletier, — one close to the other, with their backs to the parapet of the river. In the morning, also, all the sworn criers of the good city of Paris had traversed the quarters of the city, particularly the markets and the outskirts, announcing with their hoarse and untiring voices the great justice to be done by the king upon two peculators, two thieves, devourers of the people. And these people, whose interests were so warmly looked after, in order not to fail in respect to their king, left shops, stalls, and workrooms, to go and evince a little gratitude to Louis XIV., — for all the world like invited guests who fear to commit an incivility in not repairing to the house of him who invited them. According to the tenor of the sentence, which the criers read loudly and badly, two farmers of the revenues, monopolizers of money, wasters of the royal funds, extortioners and forgers, were about to undergo capital punishment on the Place de Grève, "with their names placed over their heads." As to those names, the sentence made no mention of them. The curiosity of the Parisians was at its height; and, as we have said, an immense crowd awaited with feverish impatience the hour fixed for the execution. The news had already spread that the prisoners,

transferred to the Château of Vincennes, would be conducted from that prison to the Place de Grève. Consequently the Faubourg and the Rue St. Antoine were crowded; for the population of Paris in those days of great executions was divided into two classes, — those who came to see the condemned pass by (these were timid and mild hearts, but curious in philosophy), and those who wished to see the condemned die (these were hearts eager for emotion).

On this day M. d'Artagnan, having received his last instructions from the king and made his adieus to his friends, the number of whom was at the moment reduced to Planchet, was planning out his day's work, like a man who counts his minutes and appreciates their importance.

"My departure is to be," said he, "at break of day, three o'clock in the morning. I have, then, fifteen hours before me. Take from them the six hours of sleep which are indispensable for me, — six; one hour for meals, — seven; one hour for a farewell visit to Athos, — eight; two hours for chance circumstances, — total, ten. There are then five hours left. One hour to get my money, — that is, to have it refused me by M. Fouquet; another hour to go and receive my money of M. Colbert, together with his questions and grimaces; one hour to look over my clothes and my arms, and get my boots oiled. I have still two hours left. *Mordioux!* how rich I am!" And so saying, D Artagnan felt a strange joy — a joy of youth, a perfume of those great and happy years of former times — mount to his brain and intoxicate him. "During those two hours I will go," said the musketeer, "and collect my quarter's rent of the Image de Notre-Dame. That will be pleasant! Three hundred and seventy-five livres! *Mordioux!* but that is astonishing! If the poor man who has but one livre in his pocket,

found a livre and twelve deniers, that would be justice, that would be excellent; but to the poor man such a windfall does not come. The rich man, on the contrary, makes himself revenues with his money, which he does not touch. Here are three hundred and seventy-five livres which fall to me from heaven. I will go, then, to the Image de Notre-Dame, and drink a glass of Spanish wine with my tenant, which he cannot fail to offer me. But order must be observed, M. d'Artagnan, — order must be observed! Let us organize our time, therefore, and distribute the employment of it: Art. 1, Athos; Art. 2, the Image de Notre-Dame; Art. 3, M. Fouquet; Art. 4, M. Colbert; Art. 5, supper; Art. 6, clothes, boots, horse, portmanteau; Art. 7 and last, sleep."

In accordance with this programme, D'Artagnan then went straight to the Comte de la Fère, to whom modestly and ingenuously he related a part of his fortunate adventures. Athos had not been without uneasiness on the subject of D'Artagnan's visit to the king; but a few words sufficed as an explanation of that. Athos divined that Louis had charged D'Artagnan with some important mission, and did not even make an effort to draw the secret from him. He only recommended him to take care of himself, and offered discreetly to accompany him, if that were desirable.

"But, my dear friend," said D'Artagnan, "I am going nowhere."

"What! you come to bid me adieu, and are going nowhere?"

"Oh! yes, yes," replied D'Artagnan, coloring a little, "I am going to make a purchase."

"That is quite another thing. Then I change my formula. Instead of 'Do not get yourself killed,' I will say, 'Do not get yourself robbed.'"

"My friend, I will inform you if I cast my eye upon any property that pleases me, and I shall expect you to favor me with your opinion."

"Yes, yes," said Athos, too delicate to permit himself even the consolation of a smile. Raoul imitated the paternal reserve. But D'Artagnan thought it would appear too mysterious to leave his friends under a pretence, without even telling them the route he was about to take.

"I have chosen Le Mans," said he to Athos. "Is it a good country?"

"Excellent, my friend," replied the count, without calling to his notice that Le Mans was in the same direction as La Touraine, and that by waiting two days at most, he might travel with a friend. But D'Artagnan, more embarrassed than the count, sank, at every explanation, deeper into the mud, into which he fell by degrees. "I shall set out to-morrow at daybreak," said he, at last. "Till that time, will you come with me, Raoul?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Chevalier," said the young man, "if Monsieur the Count does not want me."

"No, Raoul; I am to have an audience to-day of Monsieur, the king's brother."

Raoul asked Grimaud for his sword, which the old man brought him immediately.

"Now, then," added D'Artagnan, opening his arms to Athos, "adieu, my dear friend!" Athos held him in a long embrace; and the musketeer, who knew his discretion so well, murmured in his ear, "An affair of State," to which Athos only replied by a pressure of the hand, still more significant. They then separated.

Raoul took the arm of his old friend, who led him along the Rue St. Honoré. "I am conducting you to the abode of the god Plutus," said D'Artagnan to the young man;

"prepare yourself. All day long you will witness the piling up of crowns. Good God! how am I changed!"

"What numbers of people there are in the street!" said Raoul.

"Is there a procession to-day?" inquired D'Artagnan of a lounger.

"Monsieur, it is a hanging," replied the passer-by.

"What! a hanging at the Grève?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Devil take the rogue who gets himself hung the day I want to go and collect my rent!" exclaimed D'Artagnan. "Raoul, did you ever see anybody hung?"

"Never, Monsieur, thank God."

"Oh, how young that sounds! If you were on guard in the trenches, as I was, and a spy — But, look you, Raoul, pardon me, I am doting, — you are quite right; it is a hideous sight to see a person hung! At what hour do they hang, Monsieur, if you please?"

"Monsieur," replied the stranger, respectfully, delighted at joining conversation with two men of the sword, "it will take place about three o'clock."

"It is now only half-past one; let us lengthen our steps. We shall be there in time to collect my three hundred and seventy-five livres, and get away before the arrival of the malefactor."

"Malefactors, Monsieur," continued the citizen; "there are two of them."

"Monsieur, I thank you very much," said D'Artagnan, who, as he grew older, had become polite to the last degree.

Drawing Raoul along, he directed his course rapidly in the direction of La Grève. Without that great experience which musketeers have of a crowd, to which were joined an irresistible strength of wrist and an uncommon suppleness of shoulders, our two travellers would

not have arrived at their destination. They followed the line of the quay, which they had reached on leaving the Rue St. Honoré, where they had taken leave of Athos. D'Artagnan went first; his elbow, his wrist, his shoulder, formed three wedges which he knew how to insinuate with skill into the groups, to make them split and separate like pieces of wood. He often made use of the hilt of his sword as an additional help; introducing it between ribs that were too rebellious, making it take the part of a lever or crowbar, to separate husband from wife, uncle from nephew, and brother from brother. And all this was done so naturally, and with such gracious smiles, that people must have had ribs of bronze not to cry, "Thank you!" when the hilt played about them; or hearts of adamant not to be enchanted when the bland smile beamed upon the lips of the musketeer. Raoul, following his friend, cajoled the women, who admired his beauty; pushed back the men, who felt the rigidity of his muscles; and both made their way, thanks to these manœuvres, among the rather compact mass of the populace.

They arrived in sight of the two gibbets, from which Raoul turned away his eyes in disgust. As for D'Artagnan, he did not even see them: his house, with its serrated gable, its windows crowded with the curious, attracted and even absorbed all the attention he was capable of. He distinguished, in the Place and around the houses, a large number of musketeers on leave, who, some with women, others with friends, awaited the moment of the ceremony. What rejoiced him above all was to see that his tenant, the innkeeper, was so busy he did not know which way to turn. Three lads could not supply the drinkers. They filled the shop, the chambers, and the court even.

D'Artagnan called Raoul's attention to this concourse,

adding: "The fellow will have no excuse for not paying his rent. Look at those drinkers, Raoul; one would say they were jolly companions. *Mordioux!* why, there is no room anywhere!" D'Artagnan, however, contrived to catch hold of the master by the corner of his apron, and to make himself known to him.

"Ah, Monsieur the Chevalier!" said the innkeeper, half distracted, "one minute, if you please; I have here a hundred madmen turning my cellar upside down."

"The cellar, if you like, but not the money-box."

"Oh, Monsieur, your thirty-seven and a half pistoles are all counted out ready for you, upstairs in my chamber; but there are in that chamber thirty customers, who are sucking the staves of a little barrel of Oporto which I tapped for them this morning. Give me a minute, — only a minute!"

"Very well, very well."

"I am going," said Raoul, in a low voice, to D'Artagnan; "this hilarity is vile!"

"Monsieur," replied D'Artagnan, sternly, "you will please to remain where you are. The soldier ought to familiarize himself with all kinds of spectacles. There are in the eye, when it is young, fibres which we must learn how to harden; and we are not truly generous and good but from the moment when the eye has become hardened and the heart remains tender. Besides, my little Raoul, would you leave me alone here? That would be very unkind in you. Look! there is yonder, in the lower court, a tree, and under the shade of that tree we shall breathe more freely than in this hot atmosphere of spilt wine."

From the spot on which they had placed themselves, the two new guests of the Image de Notre-Dame heard the ever-increasing murmurs of the tide of people, and

lost neither a shout nor a gesture of the drinkers at tables in the drinking-room or scattered through the chambers. If D'Artagnan had wished to place himself as a scout for a reconnoissance, he could not have succeeded better. The tree under which he and Raoul were seated covered them with its already thick foliage; it was a low, thick chestnut-tree, with drooping branches, which cast their shade over a table so broken that the drinkers had abandoned it. We said that from this post D'Artagnan saw everything. He observed the goings and comings of the waiters; the arrival of fresh drinkers; the welcome, sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile, given to certain newcomers by certain others that were installed there. He observed all this to amuse himself, for the thirty-seven and a half pistoles were a long time coming. Raoul recalled his attention to it. "Monsieur," said he, "you do not hurry your tenant, and the condemned will soon be here. There will then be such a press, we shall not be able to get out."

"You are right," said the musketeer.—"Holloa! somebody there! *Mordioux!*" But it was in vain he shouted and knocked upon the wreck of the table, which fell to pieces beneath his fist; nobody came.

D'Artagnan was preparing to go and find the innkeeper himself, to force him to a definite explanation, when the door of the court in which he was with Raoul, a door which communicated with the garden situated at the back, opened, creaking painfully on its rusted hinges, and a man dressed as a cavalier, with his sword in the sheath but not at his belt, came out of the garden, crossed the court without closing the door, and having cast a glance at D'Artagnan and his companion, proceeded towards the tavern itself, looking about in all directions, with eyes capable of piercing walls or consciences. "Humph!"

said D'Artagnan, "my tenants are consulting. That, no doubt, now, is some amateur in matters of hanging." At the same moment the shouts and uproar of the drinkers in the upper chambers ceased. Silence, under such circumstances, surprises more than a twofold increase of noise. D'Artagnan wished to see what was the cause of this sudden silence. He then perceived that this man, dressed as a cavalier, had just entered the principal chamber, and was haranguing the tipplers, who all listened to him with the greatest attention. D'Artagnan would perhaps have heard his speech but for the overpowering noise of the popular clamors, which made a formidable accompaniment to the harangue of the orator. But it was soon finished; and all the people the house contained came out, one after the other, in little groups, so that there remained only six in the chamber. One of these six, the man with the sword, took the innkeeper aside, engaging him in conversation more or less serious; while the others lit a great fire in the chimney-place, — a circumstance rendered strange by the fine weather and the heat.

"It is very singular," said D'Artagnan to Raoul, "but I think I know those faces yonder."

"Don't you think you can smell the smoke here?" said Raoul.

"I rather think I can smell a conspiracy," replied D'Artagnan.

He had not finished speaking, when four of these men came down into the court, and without the appearance of any bad design mounted guard at the door of communication, casting at intervals glances at D'Artagnan, which signified many things.

"*Mordioux!*" said D'Artagnan, in a low voice, "there is something going on. Are you curious, Raoul?"

"According to the subject, Chevalier."

"Well, I am as curious as an old woman. Come a little more in front; we shall get a better view of the place. I would lay a wager that view will be somewhat interesting."

"But you know, Monsieur the Chevalier, that I am not willing to become a passive and indifferent spectator of the death of the two poor fellows."

"And I, then! — do you think I am a savage? We will go in again when it is time to do so. Come along!" And they made their way towards the front of the house, and placed themselves near the window, which, still more strange than anything else, remained unoccupied.

The last two drinkers, instead of looking out at this window, kept up the fire. On seeing D'Artagnan and his friend enter, "Ah! ah! a reinforcement," murmured they.

D'Artagnan jogged Raoul's elbow. "Yes, my braves, a reinforcement," said he. "*Cordieu!* there is a famous fire. Whom are you going to cook?"

The two men uttered a shout of jovial laughter, and instead of answering, threw on more wood. D'Artagnan could not take his eyes off them.

"I suppose," said one of the fire-makers, "they sent you to tell us the time, — did they not?"

"Certainly," said D'Artagnan, anxious to know what was going on; "why should I be here else, if it were not for that?"

"Then place yourself at the window, if you please, and watch."

D'Artagnan smiled under his mustache, made a sign to Raoul, and stationed himself complacently at the window.

CHAPTER LXII.

VIVE COLBERT !

THE spectacle which the Grève now presented was a frightful one. The heads, levelled by the perspective, extended afar, thick and agitated as the ears of corn in a vast plain. From time to time a fresh report or a distant rumor made the heads oscillate and thousands of eyes flash. Now and then there were great movements. All those ears of corn bent, and became waves more agitated than those of the ocean, which rolled from the extremities to the centre, and beat, like the tides, against the hedge of archers who surrounded the gibbets. Then the handles of the halberds were let fall upon the heads and shoulders of the rash invaders; at times, also, it was the steel as well as the wood, and in that case a large empty circle was formed around the guard, — a space won at the expense of the extremities, which underwent in their turn the compression of the sudden movement, which drove them against the parapets of the Seine. From the window, which commanded a view of the whole Place, D'Artagnan saw, with inward satisfaction, that such of the musketeers and guards as found themselves involved in the crowd were able, with blows of their fists and the hilts of their swords, to keep room. He even noticed that they had succeeded, by that *esprit de corps* which doubles the strength of the soldier, in getting together in one group to the amount of about fifty men; and that, with the exception of a dozen stragglers whom he still saw rolling about here and there, the nucleus was com-

plete, and within reach of his voice. But it was not the musketeers and guards only that drew the attention of D'Artagnan. Around the gibbets, and particularly at the entrances to the Arcade of St. Jean, moved a noisy mass, a busy mass; daring faces, resolute demeanors, were to be seen here and there, mingled with silly faces and indifferent demeanors; signals were interchanged, hands given and taken. D'Artagnan remarked among the groups, and those groups the most animated, the face of the cavalier whom he had seen enter by the door of communication from his garden, and who had gone upstairs to harangue the drinkers. That man was organizing squads and giv ing orders. "*Mordioux!*" said D'Artagnan to himself, "I was not deceived; I know that man, — it is Menneville. What the devil is he doing here?"

A distant murmur, which became more distinct by degrees, put an end to this reflection, and drew his attention another way. This murmur was occasioned by the arrival of the culprits; a strong picket of archers preceded them, and appeared at the angle of the arcade. The entire crowd now joined as if in one cry; all the cries, united, formed one immense howl. D'Artagnan saw Raoul turning pale, and he slapped him roughly on the shoulder. The fire-keepers turned round on hearing the great cry, and asked what was going on.

"The condemned have arrived," said D'Artagnan.

"That is well," replied they, again replenishing the fire.

D'Artagnan looked at them with much uneasiness; it was evident that those men who were making such a fire for no apparent purpose had some strange intentions. The condemned appeared upon the Place. They were walking, the executioner before them, while fifty archers formed a hedge on their right and their left. Both were dressed in black; they appeared pale but firm. They

looked impatiently over the people's heads, standing on tiptoe at every step.

D'Artagnan noticed this. "*Mordioux!*" said he, "they are in a great hurry to get a sight of the gibbet!"

Raoul drew back, without, however, having the power to leave the window. Terror even has its attractions.

"To the death! to the death!" cried fifty thousand voices.

"Yes, to the death!" howled a hundred others, as if the great mass had furnished them the response.

"To the halter! to the halter!" cried the great whole; "*Vive le Roi!*"

"Well," said D'Artagnan, "this is droll; I thought it was M. Colbert who had caused them to be hung."

There was at this moment a great rolling movement in the crowd, which stopped for a moment the march of the condemned. The men of bold and resolute mien whom D'Artagnan had observed, by dint of pressing, pushing, and lifting themselves up, had succeeded in almost touching the hedge of archers. The *cortége* resumed its march. All at once, to cries of "*Vive* Colbert!" those men, of whom D'Artagnan never lost sight, fell upon the escort, which in vain endeavored to stand against them. Behind these men was the crowd. Then began, amid a frightful tumult, as frightful a confusion. This time there was something more than cries of expectation or cries of mirth; there were cries of pain. Halberds struck men down, swords ran them through, muskets were discharged at them. The turmoil then became so great that D'Artagnan could no longer distinguish anything. Then from this chaos suddenly surged something like a visible intention, like a purpose formed. The condemned had been torn from the hands of the guards, and were being dragged towards the house of the Image de

Notre-Dame. Those who dragged them shouted "*Vive* Colbert!" The people hesitated, not knowing which they ought to fall upon, the archers or the aggressors. What stopped the people was, that those who cried "*Vive* Colbert!" began to cry, at the same time, "No halter! down with the gibbet! to the fire! to the fire! burn the thieves! burn the extortioners!" This cry, shouted as with one voice, was enthusiastically received. The populace had come to witness an execution, and here was an opportunity offered them of performing one themselves. This would of course be more agreeable to the populace; therefore they ranged themselves immediately on the side of the aggressors against the archers, crying with the minority, which had become, thanks to them, the most compact majority: "Yes, yes; to the fire with the thieves! *Vive* Colbert!"

"*Mordioux!*" exclaimed D'Artagnan, "this begins to look serious."

One of the men who remained near the chimney approached the window, a firebrand in his hand. "Ah!" said he, "it is getting warm." Then, turning to his companion, "There is the signal," added he; and he immediately applied the burning brand to the wainscoting.

Now, this tavern of the Image de Notre-Dame was not a very newly built house, and therefore the fire did not require much coaxing. In a second the boards began to crackle, and the flames arose sparkling to the ceiling. A howling from without replied to the shouts of the incendiaries. D'Artagnan, who had seen nothing of this, having been looking out upon the Place, felt, at the same time, the smoke which choked him and the fire which scorched him. "Holloa!" cried he, turning round, "is the fire here? Are you drunk or mad, my masters?"

The two men looked at each other with an air of aston-

ishment. "Why," asked they of D'Artagnan, "was it not a thing agreed upon?"

"A thing agreed upon that you should burn my house!" vociferated D'Artagnan, snatching the brand from the hand of the incendiary, and striking him with it across the face. The second wanted to come to the assistance of his comrade; but Raoul, seizing him by the middle, threw him out of the window, while D'Artagnan pushed his man down the stairs. Raoul, first disengaged, tore the burning wainscoting down, and threw it smoking out of the chamber. At a glance D'Artagnan saw there was nothing to be feared from the fire, and sprang to the window.

The disorder was at its height. The air was filled with simultaneous cries of "To the fire!" "To the death!" "To the halter!" "To the stake!" "*Vive* Colbert!" "*Vive le Roi!*" The group which had forced the culprits from the hands of the archers had drawn close to the house, which appeared to be the goal towards which they were dragging them. Menneville was at the head of this group, shouting louder than any one, "To the fire! to the fire! *Vive* Colbert!"

D'Artagnan began to comprehend. They wanted to burn the condemned, and his house was to serve as a funeral pile. "Halt there!" cried he, sword in hand, and one foot upon the window-sill. "Menneville, what do you want to do?"

"M. d'Artagnan!" cried the latter; "give way, give way!"

"To the fire! to the fire with the thieves! *Vive* Colbert!" yelled the crowd.

These cries exasperated D'Artagnan. "*Mordioux!*" said he. "What! burn the poor devils who are only condemned to be hung! that is infamous!"

Before the door, however, the mass of anxious spectators, rolled back against the walls, had become thicker and closed up the way. Menneville and his men, who were dragging along the culprits, were within ten paces of the door.

Menneville made a last effort. "Make way! make way!" cried he, pistol in hand.

"Burn them! burn them!" repeated the crowd. "The Image de Notre-Dame is on fire! Burn the thieves! burn the monopolists in the Image de Notre-Dame!"

There now remained no doubt; it was plainly D'Artagnan's house that was their object. D'Artagnan remembered the old cry, always so effective from his mouth. "To me, Musketeers!" shouted he, with the voice of a giant, with one of those voices which predominate over cannon, the sea, the tempest; "To me, Musketeers!" And suspending himself by the arm from the balcony, he allowed himself to drop in the middle of the crowd, which began to draw back from a house that rained men. Raoul was on the ground as soon as he, both with sword in hand. All the musketeers on the Place heard that mustering cry; all turned at that cry and recognised D'Artagnan. "To the captain, to the captain!" shouted they, in their turn; and the crowd opened before them as if before the prow of a vessel.

At that moment D'Artagnan and Menneville found themselves face to face.

"Make way! make way!" cried Menneville, seeing that he was within an arm's length of the door.

"No one passes here," said D'Artagnan.

"Take that, then!" said Menneville, firing his pistol, almost within touch. But before the cock had dropped, D'Artagnan had struck up Menneville's arm with the hilt of his sword, and passed the blade through his body.

"I told you plainly to keep yourself quiet," said D'Artagnan to Menneville, who rolled at his feet.

"Make way! make way!" cried the companions of Menneville, at first terrified, but soon recovering, when they perceived they had to do with only two men. But those two men are hundred-armed giants; the sword flies about in their hands like the flaming brand of the archangel. It pierces with its point, strikes with its back, cuts with its edge; every stroke brings down its man.

"For the king!" cried D'Artagnan, to every man he struck at, — that is to say, to every man that fell.

"For the king!" repeated Raoul.

This cry became the watchword for the musketeers, who, guided by it, joined D'Artagnan. During this time the archers, recovering from the panic they had undergone, charge the aggressors in the rear, and, regular as mill-strokes, overturn or knock down all that oppose them. The crowd, which sees swords gleaming and drops of blood flying in the air, — the crowd falls back, and crushes itself. At length cries for mercy and of despair resound; that is the farewell of the vanquished. The two condemned men are again in the hands of the archers.

D'Artagnan approaches them, and seeing them pale and sinking, "Console yourselves, poor men!" said he; "you will not undergo the frightful torture with which these wretches threatened you. The king has condemned you to be hung, — you shall only be hung. Go on, hang them, and it will all be over."

There is no longer anything going on at the Image de Notre-Dame. The fire has been extinguished with two tuns of wine in default of water. The conspirators have fled by the garden. The archers are dragging the culprits to the gibbets.

From this moment the affair did not occupy much

time. The executioner, heedless about operating according to the rules of art, made such haste that he despatched the two wretches in one minute.

In the mean time the people gathered around D'Artagnan. They congratulated, they cheered him. He wiped his brow, streaming with sweat, and his sword, streaming with blood. He shrugged his shoulders at seeing Menneville writhing at his feet in the last convulsions; and while Raoul turned away his eyes in compassion, he pointed out to the musketeers the gibbets laden with their melancholy fruit. "Poor devils!" said he, "I hope they died blessing me, for I saved them narrowly." These words caught the ear of Menneville just as he was breathing his last sigh. A dark, ironical smile flitted across his lips; he wished to reply, but the effort hastened the snapping of the cord of life, — he expired.

"Oh, all this is frightful!" murmured Raoul; "let us go, Monsieur the Chevalier."

"You are not wounded?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Not at all; thank you."

"That is well! Thou art a brave fellow, *mordioux!* The head of the father, and the arm of Porthos! Ah! if he had been here, that Porthos, you would have seen something worth looking at."

Then, as if by way of remembrance, "But where the devil can that brave Porthos be?" murmured D'Artagnan.

"Come, Chevalier, pray come!" urged Raoul.

"One minute, my friend; let me take my thirty-seven and a half pistoles, and I shall be at your service. The house is a good property," added D'Artagnan, as he entered the Image de Notre-Dame; "but decidedly, even if it were less profitable, I should prefer its being in another quarter."

CHAPTER LXIII.

HOW THE DIAMOND OF M. D'EYMERIS PASSED INTO THE HANDS OF M. D'ARTAGNAN.

WHILE this violent and bloody scene was passing on the Grève, several men, barricaded behind the gate of communication with the garden, replaced their swords in their sheaths, assisted one among them to mount a ready-saddled horse which was waiting in the garden, and, like a flock of frightened birds, fled away in all directions, some climbing the walls, others rushing out at the gates, with all the fury of a panic. He who mounted the horse, and who gave him the spur so sharply that the animal was near leaping the wall, — this cavalier, we say, crossed the Place Baudoyer, passed like lightning before the crowd in the streets, riding against, running over, and knocking down all that came in his way, and, ten minutes after, arrived at the house of the superintendent, even more out of breath than his horse.

The Abbé Fouquet, at the clatter of the hoofs on the pavement, appeared at a window of the court, and before even the cavalier had set foot to the ground, "Well, Danicamp?" he inquired, leaning half out at the window.

"Well, it is all over," replied the cavalier.

"All over!" cried the abbé; "then they are saved?"

"No, Monsieur," replied the cavalier, "they are hanged."

"Hanged!" repeated the abbé, turning pale. A side door suddenly opened, and Fouquet appeared in the chamber, pale, distracted, with lips half opened, groaning

with grief and anger. He stopped upon the threshold to listen to what was addressed from the court to the window.

"Miserable wretches!" said the abbé, "you did not fight, then?"

"Like lions."

"Say like cowards."

"Monsieur!"

"A hundred men accustomed to war, sword in hand, are worth ten thousand archers in a surprise. Where is Menneville, that boaster, that braggart, who was to return conqueror or die?"

"Well, Monsieur, he has kept his word; he is dead!"

"Dead! Who killed him?"

"A demon disguised as a man, a giant armed with ten flaming swords, a madman, who at one blow extinguished the fire, extinguished the riot, and caused a hundred musketeers to rise up out of the pavement of the Place de Grève."

Fouquet raised his brow, streaming with sweat, murmuring, "Oh! Lyodot and D'Eymeris! dead! dead! dead! and I dishonored!"

The abbé turned round, and perceiving his brother crushed and livid, "Come, come," said he, "it is a blow of fate, Monsieur; we must not lament thus. If we have not succeeded, it is because God —"

"Be silent, Abbé! be silent!" cried Fouquet; "your excuses are blasphemies. Order that man up here, and let him relate the details of this horrible event."

"But, Brother —"

"Obey, Monsieur!"

The abbé made a sign, and in half a minute the step of the man was heard upon the stairs. At the same time Gourville appeared behind Fouquet, like the guardian angel of the superintendent, pressing one finger upon his

lips to enjoin circumspection even amid the burst of his grief. The minister resumed all the serenity that human strength could leave at the disposal of a heart half broken with sorrow. Danicamp appeared.

"Make your report," said Gourville.

"Monsieur," replied the messenger, "we received orders to carry off the prisoners, and to cry '*Vive* Colbert!' while carrying them off."

"To burn them alive, was it not, Abbé?" interrupted Gourville.

"Yes, yes; the order was given to Menneville. Menneville knew what was to be done, and Menneville is dead." This news appeared rather to reassure Gourville than to sadden him.

"To burn them alive?" repeated the messenger, as if he doubted whether that order — the only one that had been given him, moreover — could have been real.

"Yes, certainly, to burn them alive," said the abbé, roughly.

"Granted, Monsieur, granted!" said the man, looking into the eyes and the faces of his two interlocutors, to ascertain what there was profitable or disadvantageous to himself in telling the truth.

"Now proceed," said Gourville.

"The prisoners," continued Danicamp, "were brought to the Grève; and the people, in a fury, insisted upon their being burnt instead of being hanged."

"And the people were right," said the abbé. "Go on!"

"But," resumed the man, "at the moment the archers were broken, at the moment the fire was set to one of the houses of the Place, destined to serve as a funeral-pile for the guilty, the fury, the demon, the giant of whom I told you, and who, we have been informed, was the proprietor of the house in question, aided by a young man

who accompanied him, threw out of the window those who kept up the fire, called to his assistance the musketeers who were in the crowd, leaped himself from the window of the first story into the Place, and plied his sword so desperately that the victory was restored to the archers, the prisoners were retaken, and Menneville killed. When once recaptured, the condemned were executed in three minutes."

Fouquet, in spite of his self-command, could not prevent a deep groan from escaping him.

"And this man, the proprietor of the house, what is his name?" said the abbé.

"I cannot tell you, not having been able to get sight of him; my post had been assigned me in the garden, and I remained at my post; only, the affair was related to me as I repeat it. I was ordered, when once the thing was ended, to come at best speed and announce to you how the affair turned out. According to this order, I set out at full gallop, and here I am."

"Very well, Monsieur, we have nothing else to ask of you," said the abbé, more and more dejected, in proportion as the moment approached for finding himself alone with his brother.

"Have you been paid?" demanded Gourville.

"Partly, Monsieur," replied Danicamp.

"Here are twenty pistoles. Be off, Monsieur, and never forget to defend, as at this time, the true interests of the king."

"Yes, Monsieur," said the man, bowing and pocketing the money. After which he went out.

Scarcely had the door closed behind him when Fouquet, who had remained motionless, advanced with a rapid step, and stood between the abbé and Gourville. Both of them at the same instant opened their mouths to speak to him,

"No excuses," said he, "no recriminations against anybody. If I had not been a false friend, I should not have confided to any one the care of delivering Lyodot and D'Eymeris. I alone am guilty; to me alone are reproaches and remorse due. Leave me, Abbé!"

"And yet, Monsieur, you will not prevent me," replied the latter, "from endeavoring to find out the miserable fellow who has intervened for the advantage of M. Colbert in this so well-arranged affair; for if it is good policy to love our friends dearly, I do not believe that is bad which consists in pursuing our enemies with inveteracy."

"A truce to policy, Abbé! Go, I beg of you, and do not let me hear any more of you till I send for you; what we most need is circumspection and silence. You have a terrible example before you, gentlemen; no retaliation, I forbid it."

"There are no orders," grumbled the abbé, "which will prevent me from avenging a family affront upon the guilty person."

"And I," cried Fouquet, in that imperative tone to which one feels there is nothing to reply, — "if you entertain one thought, one single thought, which is not the absolute expression of my will, I will have you cast into the Bastille two hours after that thought has manifested itself. Regulate your conduct accordingly, Abbé."

The abbé colored and bowed. Fouquet made a sign to Gourville to follow him, and was already directing his steps towards his cabinet, when the usher announced with a loud voice: "M. le Chevalier d'Artagnan."

"Who is he?" said Fouquet, carelessly, to Gourville.

"An ex-lieutenant of his Majesty's Musketeers," replied Gourville, in the same tone. Fouquet did not even take the trouble to reflect, and resumed his walk. "I beg your pardon, Monseigneur!" said Gourville, then, "but I have

remembered; this brave man has left the king's service and probably comes to receive a quarter of some pension or other."

"Devil take him!" said Fouquet, "why does he choose his time so ill?"

"Permit me, then, Monseigneur, to announce your refusal to him; for he is one of my acquaintance, and is a man whom in our present circumstances it would be better to have as a friend than an enemy."

"Answer him as you please," said Fouquet.

"Eh! good Lord!" said the abbé, still rancorous, like a churchman; "tell him there is no money, particularly for musketeers."

But scarcely had the abbé uttered this imprudent speech, when the partly open door was thrown back, and D'Artagnan appeared.

"M. Fouquet," said he, "I was well aware there was no money for musketeers here. Therefore I did not come to obtain any, but to have it refused. That being done, receive my thanks. I wish you good-day, and will go and seek it at M. Colbert's;" and he went out, after making an easy bow.

"Gourville," said Fouquet, "run after that man and bring him back!" Gourville obeyed, and overtook D'Artagnan on the stairs.

D'Artagnan, hearing steps behind him, turned round and perceived Gourville. "*Mordioux!* my dear Monsieur," said he, "these are sad lessons which you gentlemen of finance teach us! I come to M. Fouquet to receive a sum accorded by his Majesty, and I am received like a mendicant who comes to ask charity, or like a thief who comes to steal a piece of plate."

"But you pronounced the name of M. Colbert, my dear M. d'Artagnan; you said you were going to M. Colbert's!"

"I certainly am going there, were it only to ask satisfaction in regard to the people who try to burn houses, crying, '*Vive* Colbert!'"

Gourville pricked up his ears. "Oh!" said he, "you allude to what has just happened at the Grève?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And in what did that which has taken place concern you?"

"What! do you ask me whether it concerns me, or does not concern me, if M. Colbert pleases to make a funeral-pile of my house?"

"So, your house — was it your house they wanted to burn?"

"*Pardieu!* was it!"

"Is the pot-house of the Image de Notre-Dame yours, then?"

"It has been for a week."

"Well, then, are you the brave captain, are you the valiant blade, who dispersed those who wished to burn the condemned?"

"My dear M. Gourville, put yourself in my place; I am an agent of the public force and a proprietor. As a captain, it is my duty to have the orders of the king accomplished. As a proprietor, it is my interest that my house should not be burned. I have, then, at the same time attended to the laws of interest and duty in replacing Messieurs Lyodot and D'Eymeris in the hands of the archers."

"Then it was you who threw the man out of the window?"

"It was I myself," replied D'Artagnan, modestly.

"And you who killed Menneville?"

"I had that misfortune," said D'Artagnan, bowing like a man who is being congratulated.

"It was you, then, in short, who caused the two condemned persons to be hanged?"

"Instead of being burned; yes, Monsieur, and I glory in it. I snatched the poor devils from horrible tortures. Understand, my dear M. Gourville, that they wanted to burn them alive! It exceeds imagination!"

"Go, my dear M. d'Artagnan, go!" said Gourville, anxious to spare Fouquet the sight of a man who had just caused him such profound grief.

"No," said Fouquet, who had heard all from the door of the antechamber, "not so; on the contrary, M. d'Artagnan, come in."

D'Artagnan wiped from the hilt of his sword a last bloody trace, which had escaped his notice, and returned. He then found himself face to face with these three men, whose countenances wore very different expressions, — with the abbé it was anger, with Gourville stupor, with Fouquet dejection.

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur the Minister," said D'Artagnan, "but my time is short; I have to go to the office of the intendant, to have an explanation with M. Colbert, and to draw my quarter's pension."

"But, Monsieur," said Fouquet, "there is money here." D'Artagnan looked at the superintendent with astonishment. "You have been answered inconsiderately, Monsieur, I know, because I heard it," said the minister; "a man of your merit ought to be known by everybody." D'Artagnan bowed. "Have you an order?" added Fouquet.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Give it to me, I will pay you myself; come with me."

Fouquet made a sign to Gourville and the abbé, who remained in the room where they were. He led D'Artagnan into his cabinet. As soon as they were there, "How much is due to you, Monsieur?"

"Why, something like five thousand livres, Monseigneur."

"For your arrears of pay?"

"For a quarter's pay."

"A quarter consisting of five thousand livres!" said Fouquet, fixing upon the musketeer a searching look. "Does the king, then, give you twenty thousand livres a year?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, twenty thousand livres a year; do you think it is too much?"

"I?" cried Fouquet; and he smiled bitterly. "If I had any knowledge of mankind; if I were — instead of a frivolous, inconsequent, and vain mind — of a prudent and deliberate mind; if, in a word, I had known, as certain persons have, how to regulate my life, you would not receive twenty thousand livres a year but a hundred thousand, and you would not belong to the king but to me."

D'Artagnan colored slightly. There is in the manner in which a eulogium is given, in the voice of the eulogist, in his affectionate tone, a poison so sweet that the strongest mind is sometimes intoxicated by it. The superintendent ended this speech by opening a drawer and taking from it four *rouleaux*, which he placed before D'Artagnan. The Gascon broke open one. "Gold!" said he.

"It will be less burdonsome, Monsieur."

"But then, Monsieur, this makes twenty thousand livres."

"No doubt."

"But only five are due to me."

"I wish to spare you the trouble of coming four times to my office."

"You overwhelm me, Monsieur."

"I do only what I ought to do, Monsieur the Chevalier; and I hope you will not bear me any malice on account of the rude reception my brother gave you. He is of a sour, capricious disposition."

"Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "believe me nothing would grieve me more than an apology from you."

"Therefore I will make no more, and will content myself with asking of you a favor."

"Oh, Monsieur!"

Fouquet drew from his finger a diamond worth about a thousand pistoles. "Monsieur," said he, "this stone was given me by a friend of my childhood, by a man to whom you have rendered a great service." Fouquet's voice softened perceptibly.

"A service — I?" said the musketeer; "I have rendered a service to one of your friends?"

"You cannot have forgotten it, Monsieur, for it was this very day."

"And that friend's name was — "

"M. d'Eymeris."

"One of the condemned?"

"Yes, one of the victims. Well, M. d'Artagnan, in return for the service you have rendered him, I beg you to accept this diamond. Do so for my sake."

"Monsieur! you — "

"Accept it, I say. To-day is with me a day of mourning; hereafter you will, perhaps, learn why. To-day I have lost a friend; well, I will try to get another."

"But, M. Fouquet — "

"Adieu! M. d'Artagnan, adieu!" cried Fouquet, with much emotion; "or rather, *au revoir!*" and the minister quitted the room, leaving in the hands of the musketeer the ring and the twenty thousand livres.

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, after a moment's sober reflection. "Do I understand what this means? *Mordioux!* I can understand so far, — he is a gallant man! I will go and explain matters with M. Colbert;" and he went out.

CHAPTER LXIV.

OF THE NOTABLE DIFFERENCE D'ARTAGNAN FINDS BETWEEN MONSIEUR THE INTENDANT AND MONSIEUR THE SUPERINTENDENT.

M. Colbert resided in the Rue Neuve des Petits-Champs, in a house which had belonged to Beautru. D'Artagnan's legs cleared the distance in a short quarter of an hour. When he arrived at the residence of the new favorite, the court was full of archers and policemen, who had come to congratulate him or to excuse themselves, according to whether he should choose to praise or blame. The sentiment of flattery is instinctive among people of abject condition; they have the sense of it, as the wild animal has that of hearing and smell. These people, or their leader, had understood that they could give pleasure to M. Colbert in rendering him an account of the way in which his name had been pronounced during the affray.

D'Artagnan made his appearance just as the chief of the watch was giving his report. D'Artagnan stood close to the door, behind the archers. That officer took Colbert aside, in spite of his resistance and the contraction of his heavy eyebrows. "In case," said he, "you had really desired, Monsieur, that the people should do justice to the two traitors, it would have been wise to warn us of it; for indeed, Monsieur, in spite of our regret at displeasing you or thwarting your views, we had our orders to execute."

"Triple fool!" replied Colbert, furiously shaking his hair, thick and black as a mane; "what are you telling

me here? What! that I could have had an idea of a riot! Are you mad or drunk?"

"But, Monsieur, they cried, '*Vive* Colbert!'" replied the trembling chief of watch.

"A handful of conspirators —"

"No, no; a mass of people."

"Ah, indeed!" said Colbert, expanding. "A mass of people cried, '*Vive* Colbert!' Are you certain of what you say, Monsieur?"

"We had nothing to do but to open our ears, or rather to close them, so terrible were the cries."

"And this was from the people, the real people?"

"Certainly, Monsieur; only, these real people beat us."

"Oh, very well!" continued Colbert, thoughtfully. "Then you suppose it was the people who wished to burn the condemned?"

"Oh, yes, Monsieur!"

"That is quite another thing. You strongly resisted, then?"

"We had three men killed, Monsieur."

"But you killed nobody yourselves?"

"Monsieur, a few of the rioters were left upon the square, and one among them was not a common man."

"Who was he?"

"A certain Menneville, upon whom the police have a long time had an eye."

"Menneville!" exclaimed Colbert, "what! he who killed, in the Rue de la Hochette, a worthy man who wanted a fat fowl?"

"Yes, Monsieur; the same."

"And did this Menneville also cry, '*Vive* Colbert!'"

"Louder than all the rest; like a madman."

The brow of Colbert became cloudy and wrinkled. A

kind of ambitious glory which had lighted his face was extinguished, like the light of those glow-worms which we crush beneath the grass. "Why, then, do you say," resumed the deceived intendant, "that the initiative came from the people? Menneville was my enemy; I would have had him hanged, and he knew it well. Menneville belonged to the Abbé Fouquet, — the whole affair originated with Fouquet; does not everybody know that the condemned were his friends from childhood?"

"That is true," thought D'Artagnan, "and now are all my doubts cleared up. I repeat it: M. Fouquet may be what they please, but he is a gallant man."

"And," pursued Colbert, "are you quite sure Menneville is dead?"

D'Artagnan thought the time had come for him to make his appearance. "Perfectly, Monsieur," replied he, advancing suddenly.

"Oh! is that you, Monsieur?" said Colbert.

"In person," replied the musketeer, with his deliberate tone; "it appears that you had in Menneville a pretty little enemy."

"It was not I, Monsieur, who had an enemy," replied Colbert; "it was the king."

"Double brute!" thought D'Artagnan, "to think to play the great man and the hypocrite with me. Well," continued he to Colbert, "I am very happy to have rendered so good a service to the king; will you take upon yourself to tell his Majesty, Monsieur the Intendant?"

"What commission do you give me, and what do you charge me to tell his Majesty, Monsieur? Be precise, if you please," said Colbert, in a sharp voice, tuned beforehand to hostility.

"I give you no commission," replied D'Artagnan, with that calmness which never abandons the banterer. "I

thought it would be easy for you to announce to his Majesty that it was I who, being there by chance, did justice to Menneville, and restored things to order."

Colbert opened his eyes, and interrogated the chief of the watch with a look. "Ah, it is very true," said the latter, "that this gentleman saved us."

"Why did you not tell me, Monsieur, that you had come to inform me of this?" said Colbert, with envy; "everything is explained, and better for you than for any other."

"You are in error, Monsieur the Intendant; I did not at all come for the purpose of informing you of this."

"It is an exploit, nevertheless."

"Oh!" said the musketeer, carelessly, "constant habit blunts the mind."

"To what do I owe the honor of your visit, then?"

"Simply to this: the king ordered me to come to you."

"Ah!" said Colbert, recovering his self-possession, because he saw D'Artagnan draw a paper from his pocket; "it is to demand some money of me?"

"Precisely, Monsieur."

"Have the goodness to wait, if you please, Monsieur, till I have despatched the report of the watch."

D'Artagnan turned round upon his heel insolently enough, and finding himself face to face with Colbert after this first turn, bowed to him as a harlequin would have done; then, after a second evolution, he directed his steps towards the door in quick time. Colbert was struck with this pointed rudeness, to which he was not accustomed. In general, men of the sword, when they came to his office, were in such want of money that though their feet had taken root in the marble, they would not have lost their patience. Was D'Artagnan

going straight to the king? Would he go and complain of his bad reception, or recount his exploit? This was a grave matter of consideration. At all events, the moment was badly chosen to send D'Artagnan away, whether he came from the king or on his own account. The musketeer had rendered too great a service, and that too recently, for it to be already forgotten. Therefore Colbert thought it would be better to shake off his arrogance and call D'Artagnan back. "Ho, M. d'Artagnan!" cried Colbert; "what! are you leaving me thus?"

D'Artagnan turned round. "Why not?" said he, quietly; "we have no more to say to each other, have we?"

"You have at least money to get, as you have an order."

"Who? I? Oh, not at all, my dear M. Colbert!"

"But, Monsieur, you have an order! And in the same manner as you give a sword-thrust for the king when you are required, I, on my part, pay when an order is presented to me. Present yours."

"It is useless, my dear M. Colbert," said D'Artagnan, who inwardly enjoyed the confusion introduced into the ideas of Colbert; "this order is paid."

"Paid! by whom?"

"Why, by Monsieur the Superintendent."

Colbert turned pale. "Explain yourself, then," said he, in a stifled voice; "if you are paid, why do you show me that paper?"

"In consequence of the charge of which you spoke to me so ingeniously just now, dear M. Colbert; the king told me to draw a quarter of the pension he is pleased to make me."

"Of me?" said Colbert.

"Not exactly. The king said to me: 'Go to M. Fou-

quet; the superintendent will, perhaps, have no money, then you will go and draw it of M. Colbert.'"

The countenance of M. Colbert brightened for a moment; but it was with his unfortunate physiognomy as with a stormy sky, sometimes radiant, sometimes dark as night, according as the lightning gleams or the cloud passes. "And was there any money in the superintendent's coffers?" asked he.

"Why, yes, he could not be badly off for money," replied D'Artagnan, "since M. Fouquet, instead of paying me a quarter, five thousand livres — "

"A quarter, five thousand livres!" exclaimed Colbert, struck, as Fouquet had been, with the largeness of the sum destined to pay for the service of a soldier; "why, that would be a pension of twenty thousand livres!"

"Exactly, M. Colbert. *Peste!* you reckon like old Pythagoras; yes, twenty thousand livres."

"Ten times the salary of an intendant of the finances! I beg to offer you my compliments," said Colbert, with a venomous smile.

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, "the king apologized for giving me so little; but he promised to make it more hereafter, when he should be rich; but I must go, having much to do — "

"So, then, notwithstanding the expectation of the king, the superintendent paid you, did he?"

"In the same manner as, in opposition to the king's expectation, you refused to pay me."

"I did not refuse, Monsieur; I only begged you to wait. And you say that M. Fouquet paid you your five thousand livres?"

"Yes, as you might have done; but he did still better than that, M. Colbert."

"And what did he do?"

"He politely counted me down the whole of the sum, saying that, for the king, his coffers were always full."

"The whole of the sum! M. Fouquet has counted you out twenty thousand livres instead of five thousand?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"And what for?"

"In order to spare me three visits to the money-chest of the superintendent; so that I have the twenty thousand livres in my pocket in good new coin. You see, then, that I am able to go away without standing in need of you, having come here only for form's sake;" and D'Artagnan slapped his hand upon his pocket, with a laugh which disclosed to Colbert thirty-two magnificent teeth, as white as those of a man twenty-five years old, and which seemed to say in their language, "Serve up to us thirty-two little Colberts, and we will grind them willingly."

The serpent is as brave as the lion, the hawk as courageous as the eagle; that cannot be disputed. It can only be said of animals that are decidedly cowardly, and are so called, that they will be brave when they have to defend themselves. Colbert was not frightened at the thirty-two teeth of D'Artagnan; he recovered himself, and suddenly. "Monsieur," said he, "Monsieur the Superintendent has done what he had no right to do."

"What do you mean by that?" replied D'Artagnan.

"I mean that your order — will you let me see your order, if you please?"

"Very willingly; here it is."

Colbert seized the paper with an eagerness which the musketeer did not remark without uneasiness, and particularly without a certain degree of regret at having trusted him with it. "Well, Monsieur, the royal order says this: 'At sight, I command that there be paid to M.

d'Artagnan the sum of five thousand livres, forming a quarter of the pension I have made him.'"

"So, in fact, it is written," said D'Artagnan, affecting calmness.

"Very well; the king owed you only five thousand livres. Why has more been given to you?"

"Because there was more, and M. Fouquet was willing to give me more. That does not concern anybody."

"It is natural," said Colbert, with supercilious ease, "that you should be ignorant of the usages of finance; but, Monsieur, when you have a thousand livres to pay, what do you do?"

"I never have a thousand livres to pay," replied D'Artagnan.

"Once more," said Colbert, irritated, "if you had any payment to make, would you not pay what you ought?"

"That only proves one thing," said D'Artagnan; "and that is, that you have your particular customs in finance, while M. Fouquet has his own."

"Mine, Monsieur, are the correct ones."

"I do not say they are not."

"And you have received what was not due to you."

The eye of D'Artagnan flashed. "What is not due to me yet, you meant to say, M. Colbert; for if I had received what was not due to me at all, I should have committed a theft"

Colbert made no reply to this subtlety. "You then owe fifteen thousand livres to the public treasury," said he, carried away by his jealous ardor.

"Then you must give me credit for them," replied D'Artagnan, with his imperceptible irony.

"Not at all, Monsieur."

"Well, what will you do, then? You will not take my *rouleaux* from me, will you?"

"You must return them to my coffers."

"I? Oh, Monsieur Colbert, don't reckon upon that!

"The king wants his money, Monsieur."

"And I, Monsieur, — I want the king's money."

"That may be; but you must return this."

"By no means. I have always understood that in matters of finance, as you call it, a good cashier never gives back, nor takes back."

"Then, Monsieur, we shall see what the king will say about it. I will show him this order, which proves that M. Fouquet not only pays what he does not owe, but that he does not even take care of the receipts for what he has paid."

"Ah! now I understand why you have taken that paper, M. Colbert!"

Colbert did not perceive all that there was of a threatening character in his name pronounced in a certain manner. "You will see hereafter what use I shall make of it," replied he, holding up the order in his fingers.

"Oh!" exclaimed D'Artagnan, snatching the paper from him by a rapid movement, "I understand it perfectly well, M. Colbert; I have no occasion to wait for that;" and he crumpled up in his pocket the paper he had so cleverly seized.

"Monsieur! Monsieur!" cried Colbert, "that is violence!"

"Nonsense! you must not be particular about the manners of a soldier!" replied the musketeer. "Receive my compliments, my dear M. Colbert!" and he went out, laughing in the face of the future minister.

"That man, now," muttered he, "was about to adore me; it is a great pity I was obliged to part company with him."

CHAPTER LXV.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE HEART AND MIND.

For a man who had seen so many much more dangerous positions, that of D'Artagnan with respect to M. Colbert was only comic. D'Artagnan, therefore, did not deny himself the satisfaction of laughing at the expense of Monsieur the Intendant, from the Rue Neuve des Petits-Champs to the Rue des Lombards. It was a great while since D'Artagnan had laughed so long. He was still laughing when Planchet appeared, laughing likewise, at the door of his house; for Planchet, since the return of his patron, since the entrance of the English guineas, passed the greater part of his life in doing what D'Artagnan had done only from the Rue Neuve des Petits-Champs to the Rue des Lombards.

"You have come, then, my dear master?" said Planchet.

"No, my friend," replied the musketeer; "I am going and that quickly. I will sup with you, go to bed, sleep five hours, and at break of day leap into my saddle. Has my horse had an extra feed?"

"Eh! my dear master," replied Planchet, "you know very well that your horse is the jewel of the family; that my lads are caressing it all day, and cramming it with sugar, nuts, and biscuits. You ask me if he has had an extra feed of oats; you should ask if he has not had enough to burst him ten times over."

"Very well, Planchet; that is all right. Now, then, I pass to what concerns me, — my supper?"

"Ready. A smoking roast, white wine, crawfish, and fresh-gathered cherries. That is something new, my master."

"You are a capital fellow, Planchet; come on, then, let us sup, and I will go to bed."

During supper D'Artagnan observed that Planchet kept rubbing his forehead, as if to facilitate the issue of some idea closely pent within his brain. He looked with an air of kindness at this worthy companion of his former trials, and clinking glass against glass, "Come, Friend Planchet," said he, "let us see what it is that gives you so much trouble to announce to me. *Mordioux!* speak freely, and you will speak quickly."

"Well, this is it," answered Planchet; "you appear to me to be going on some expedition or other."

"I don't say that I am not."

"Then you have some new idea?"

"That is possible, too, Planchet."

"Then there will be a fresh capital to be ventured. I will lay down fifty thousand livres upon the idea you are about to carry out;" and so saying, Planchet rubbed his hands one against the other with a rapidity evincing great delight.

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, "there is but one misfortune in it."

"And what is that?"

"That the idea is not mine. I can risk nothing upon it." These words drew a deep sigh from the heart of Planchet. Avarice is an ardent counsellor: she carries away her man, as Satan did Jesus, to the mountain; and when once she has shown to an unfortunate man all the kingdoms of the earth, she may take her ease, knowing full well that she has left her companion Envy to gnaw his heart. Planchet had tasted of riches

easily acquired, and was never afterwards likely to limit his desires; but as he had a good heart in spite of his covetousness, as he adored D'Artagnan, he could not refrain from paying him a thousand compliments, each more affectionate than the others. He would not have been sorry, nevertheless, to have caught a little hint of the secret his master concealed so well; but tricks, turns, counsels, and traps were all useless, — D'Artagnan let nothing confidential escape him.

The evening passed thus. After supper the portmanteau occupied D'Artagnan's attention; he took a turn to the stable, patted his horse, and examined his shoes and legs; then, having counted over his money, he went to bed, sleeping as if only twenty years old, because he had neither anxiety nor remorse; he closed his eyes five minutes after having blown out his light. Yet there were many things to keep him awake. Thought surged in his brain, conjectures abounded, and D'Artagnan was a great drawer of horoscopes; but with that imperturbable phlegm which does more than genius for the fortune and happiness of men of action, he put off reflection till the next day, for fear, he said, that he might not be fresh when he wanted to be so.

The day came. The Rue des Lombards had its share of the caresses of Aurora with the rosy fingers, and D'Artagnan arose with Aurora. He did not awaken anybody; he placed his portmanteau under his arm, descended the stairs without making one of them creak, and without disturbing one of the sleepers whose sonorous breathing might be heard in every story from garret to cellar; then, having saddled his horse and shut the stable and house doors, he set off, at a foot-pace, on his expedition to Bretagne. He had done quite right in not thinking over, the evening before, all the political and

diplomatic affairs which solicited his attention; for in the morning, in the freshness of the mild twilight, his ideas developed themselves with clearness and fluency. In the first place, as he passed the house of Fouquet, he threw into a large gaping box at the superintendent's door the fortunate order which, the evening before, he had had so much trouble to extract from the hooked fingers of the intendant. Placed in an envelope, and addressed to Fouquet, its nature had not even been divined by Planchet, who in divination was equal to Calchas or the Pythian Apollo. D'Artagnan thus sent back the receipt to Fouquet, without compromising himself, and without having thenceforward any reproaches to make himself. When he had effected this proper restitution, "Now," said he to himself, "let us inhale freely the morning air; let us invite freedom from care, and abundant health; let us allow the horse Zephyr, whose flanks swell as if he had to snuff in a hemisphere, to breathe; and let us be very ingenious in our little calculations. It is time," pursued D'Artagnan, "to form a plan of the campaign; and, according to the method of M. de Turenne, who has a very large head full of all sorts of good counsel, before the plan of the campaign it is advisable to draw a portrait of the generals to whom we are to be opposed. In the first place, M. Fouquet presents himself. What is M. Fouquet? M. Fouquet," replied D'Artagnan to himself, "is a handsome man, very much beloved by the women; a generous man, very much beloved by the poets; a man of wit, much execrated by pretenders. I am neither woman, poet, nor pretender; I neither love nor hate Monsieur the Superintendent. I find myself, therefore, in the same position in which M. de Turenne found himself when he had to win the Battle of the Dunes. He did not hate the Spaniards, but he

beat them soundly. No, there is a better example; I am in the same position in which M. de Turenne found himself when opposed to the Prince de Condé at Jargeau, Gien, and the Faubourg St. Antoine. He did not execrate Monsieur the Prince, it is true, but he obeyed the king. Monsieur the Prince is an agreeable man, but the king is king. Turenne heaved a deep sigh, called Condé 'My cousin,' and swept away his army. Now, what does the king wish? That does not concern me. Now, what does M. Colbert wish? Oh, that 's another thing. M. Colbert wishes all that M. Fouquet does not wish. Then what does M. Fouquet wish? Oh, that is serious! M. Fouquet wishes precisely all that the king wishes."

This monologue ended, D'Artagnan began to laugh, while making his whip whistle in the air. He was already on the high-road, frightening the birds in the hedges, listening to the louis dancing in his leather pocket at every step; and, let us confess it, every time that D'Artagnan found himself in such circumstances, tenderness was not his dominant vice. "Come," said he, "the expedition is not a very dangerous one; and it will fall out with my voyage as with that play M. Monk took me to see in London, which was called, I think, 'Much Ado about Nothing.'"

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE JOURNEY.

It was perhaps the fiftieth time since the day on which we opened this history, that this man, with a heart of bronze and muscles of steel, had left house and friends — everything, in short — to go in search of fortune and death. The one — that is to say, Death — had constantly retreated before him, as if afraid of him; the other — that is to say, Fortune — only for a month past had really made an alliance with him. Although he was not a great philosopher, after the fashion of either Epicurus or Socrates, his was a powerful mind, having knowledge of life and endowed with thought. No one is as brave, as adventurous, or as skilful as D'Artagnan, without being at the same time inclined to be a *dreamer*. He had picked up here and there some scraps of M. de la Rochefoucauld, worthy of being translated into Latin by the gentlemen of Port Royal; and he had made a collection, while passing the time in the society of Athos and Aramis, of many morsels of Seneca and Cicero, translated by them and applied to the uses of common life. That contempt of riches which our Gascon had observed as an article of faith during the first thirty-five years of his life had for a long time been considered by him as the first article of the code of bravery. "Article first," said he: "A man is brave because he has nothing; a man has nothing because he despises riches." Therefore, with these principles, which, as we have said, had regulated

the first thirty-five years of his life, D'Artagnan was no sooner possessed of riches than he felt it necessary to ask himself if in spite of his riches he were still brave. To this, for any other than D'Artagnan, the episode of the Place de Grève might have served as an answer. Many consciences would have been satisfied with it, but D'Artagnan was brave enough to ask himself sincerely and conscientiously if he were brave. Therefore to this, "But it appears to me that I drew promptly enough and cut and thrust prettily enough on the Place de Grève to be satisfied of my bravery," D'Artagnan had himself replied: —

"Gently, Captain; that is not an answer. I was brave that day, because they were burning my house; and there are a hundred, and even a thousand, odds against one, that if those gentlemen of the riots had not formed that unlucky idea, their plan of attack would have succeeded, or at least it would not have been I who opposed myself to it. Now, what will be brought against me? I have no house to be burned in Bretagne; I have no treasure there that can be taken from me. No; but I have my skin, — that precious skin of M. d'Artagnan, which to him is worth more than all the houses and all the treasures of the world; that skin to which I cling above everything, because it is, everything considered, the binding of a body which encloses a heart very warm and very well satisfied to beat and consequently to live. Then, I do desire to live; and in reality I live much better, more completely, since I have become rich. Who the devil ever said that money spoiled life? Upon my soul, it is no such thing; on the contrary, it seems as if I absorbed a double quantity of air and sunlight. *Mordioux!* what will it be, then, if I double that fortune, and if instead of the switch I now hold in my hand I should ever

carry the bâton of a marshal? Then, I really don't know if there will be, from that moment, enough of air and sunlight for me. In fact, this is not a dream; who the devil would oppose it, if the king made me a duke and a marshal, as his father, King Louis XIII., made a duke and constable of Albert de Luynes? Am I not as brave as that imbecile De Vitry, and much more intelligent than he? Ah! that 's exactly what will prevent my advancement; I have too much wit. Luckily, if there is any justice in this world, Fortune owes me many compensations. She owes me, certainly, a recompense for all I did for Anne of Austria, and an indemnification for all she has not done for me. Then at the present I am very well with a king, and with a king who has the appearance of determining to reign. May God keep him in that illustrious road! For if he is resolved to reign, he will want me; and if he wants me, he will give me what he has promised me, — warmth and light; so that I march, comparatively, to-day, as I marched formerly, — from nothing to everything. Only, the nothing of to-day is the all of former days; there has only this little change taken place in my life. And now let us see! let us take into consideration the heart, as I just now was speaking of it. But, in truth, I only spoke of it from memory;" and the Gascon applied his hand to his breast, as if he were actually seeking the place where his heart was.

"Ah, wretch!" murmured he, smiling with bitterness. "Ah, poor worm! You hoped for an instant that you had not a heart, and now you find you have one, — bad courtier as you are, — and even one of the most seditious. You have a heart which speaks to you in favor of M. Fouquet. And what is M. Fouquet when the king is in question? A conspirator, a real conspirator, who did not even give himself the trouble to conceal his being a

conspirator; therefore, what a weapon would you not have against him, if his good grace and his intelligence had not made a scabbard for that weapon! An armed revolt! — for, in fact, M. Fouquet has been guilty of an armed revolt. Thus, while the king vaguely suspects M. Fouquet of rebellion, I know it, — I could prove that M. Fouquet had caused the shedding of the blood of his Majesty's subjects. Now, then, let us see! Knowing all that, and holding my tongue, what further would this pitiful heart wish in return for a kind action of M. Fouquet's, for an advance of fifteen thousand livres, for a diamond worth a thousand pistoles, for a smile in which there was as much bitterness as kindness? — I save his life.

"Now, I hope," continued the musketeer, "that this imbecile of a heart is going to preserve silence, and so be fairly quits with M. Fouquet. Now, then, the king becomes my sun; and as my heart is quits with M. Fouquet, let him beware who places himself between me and my sun! Forward, for his Majesty Louis XIV.! forward!"

These reflections were the only impediments which could retard the progress of D'Artagnan. These reflections once finished, he increased the speed of his horse. But, however perfect his horse Zephyr might be, he could not go on forever. The day after his departure from Paris, he left him at Chartres, with an old friend he had met in a hotel-keeper of that city. From that moment the musketeer travelled on post-horses. Thanks to this mode of locomotion, he traversed the space which separates Chartres from Châteaubriand. In the last of these two cities, far enough from the coast to prevent any one guessing that D'Artagnan wished to reach the sea, — far enough from Paris to prevent all suspicion of his

coming as a messenger from his Majesty, Louis XIV., whom D'Artagnan had called his sun, without suspecting that he who was only at present a rather poor star in the heaven of royalty, would one day make that star his emblem, — the messenger of Louis XIV., we say, gave up post-horses and purchased a nag of the meanest appearance, one of those animals which an officer of cavalry would never think of choosing for fear of being disgraced. Excepting the color, this new acquisition recalled to the mind of D'Artagnan the famous orange-colored horse with which, or rather upon which, he had made his first entrance into active life. Truth to say, from the moment he mounted this new steed, it was no longer D'Artagnan who was travelling, — it was a good man clothed in an iron-gray close coat and maroon trunk-hose, preserving the mean between a priest and a layman; that which brought him nearest to the churchman was that D'Artagnan had placed on his head a skull-cap of threadbare velvet, and over it a large black hat. In place of a sword, a stick, hung by a cord to his wrist; but to which he promised himself to join as an unexpected auxiliary, upon occasion, a good dagger, ten inches long, concealed under his cloak. The nag purchased at Châteaubriand completed the metamorphosis; it was called, or rather D'Artagnan called it, Furet (ferret).

"If I have changed Zephyr into Furet," said D'Artagnan, "I must make some diminutive or other of my own name. So, instead of D'Artagnan, I will be Agnan, for short; that is a concession which I naturally owe to my gray coat, my round hat, and my rusty cap."

M. Agnan, then, travelled without too great a shaking up upon Furet, who ambled like a true butter-woman's pad, and who with his amble made cheerfully twelve leagues a day, upon four spindle-shanks whose strength

and sureness the practised eye of D'Artagnan had appreciated beneath the thick mass of hair which covered them. Jogging along, the traveller took notes, studied the stern and cold landscape through which he was travelling, ever seeking the most plausible pretext to go to Belle-Isle-en-Mer, and to see everything without arousing suspicion. In this manner he was enabled to convince himself of the importance the event assumed in proportion as he drew near to it. In this remote country, in this ancient duchy of Bretagne, — which was not France at that period, and is not even to-day, — the people knew nothing of the King of France. They not only did not know him, but they were unwilling to know him. One fact — a single one — floated visibly for them upon the current of politics. Their ancient dukes no longer governed them; but there was a void, — nothing more. In the place of the sovereign duke, the seigneurs of parishes reigned without control; and, above these seigneurs, God, who has never been forgotten in Bretagne. Among these suzerains of castles and parishes, the most powerful, the most rich, and above all the most popular, was M. Fouquet, seigneur of Belle-Isle. Even in the country, even within sight of that mysterious isle, legends and traditions consecrated its wonders. Every one did not penetrate into it; the isle, of an extent of six leagues in length and six in breadth, was a seigniorial property which the people had for a long time respected, protected as it was by the name of Retz, so much dreaded in the country. Shortly after the raising of this seigniory to a marquisate by Charles IX., Belle-Isle passed to M. Fouquet. The celebrity of the isle did not date from yesterday; its name, or rather its qualification, is traced back to the remotest antiquity; the ancients called it Kalonèse, from two Greek words, signifying "beautiful

isle." Thus, at a distance of eighteen hundred years, it had borne, in another language, the same name it still bears. There was, then, something in itself in this property of M. Fouquet's, besides its position six leagues off the coast of France, — a position which makes it a sovereign in its maritime solitude, like a majestic ship which should disdain roads, and proudly cast its anchor in mid-ocean.

D'Artagnan learned all this without appearing the least in the world astonished. He also learned that the best way to get intelligence was to go to La Roche-Bernard, a tolerably important city at the mouth of the Vilaine. Perhaps there he could embark; if not, crossing the salt marshes, he would repair to Guérande or to Le Croisic, to wait for an opportunity to cross over to Belle-Isle. He had discovered, besides, since his departure from Châteaubriand, that nothing would be impossible for Furet under M. Agnan's urging, and nothing to M. Agnan upon Furet's example. He prepared, then, to sup off a teal and an oil-cake, in a hotel of La Roche-Bernard, and ordered to be brought from the cellar, to wash down these two Breton dishes, some cider, which, the moment it touched his lips, he perceived to be more Breton still.

CHAPTER LXVII.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH A POET WHO HAD TURNED PRINTER FOR THE SAKE OF PRINTING HIS OWN VERSES.

Before taking his place at table, D'Artagnan acquired, as was his custom, all the information he could; but it is an axiom of curiosity, that every man who wishes to question well and fruitfully ought in the first place to lay himself open to questions. D'Artagnan sought, then, with his usual skill, a useful questioner in the hostelry of La Roche-Bernard. At the moment there were in the house, in the first story, two travellers occupied also in preparations for supper, or with their supper itself. D'Artagnan had seen their nags in the stable, and their baggage in the hall. One travelled with a lackey, as an important personage; two Perche mares — sleek, sound beasts — were their means of locomotion. The other — rather a little fellow, a traveller of meagre appearance, wearing a dusty surtout, dirty linen, boots more worn by the pavement than the stirrup — had come from Nantes with a cart drawn by a horse so like Furet in color, that D'Artagnan might have gone a hundred miles without finding a better match. This cart contained divers large packets wrapped up in pieces of old stuff.

"That traveller there," said D'Artagnan to himself, "is the man for my money. He will do; he suits me. I ought to do for and suit him; M. Agnan, with the gray doublet and the rusty cap, is not unworthy of supping with the gentleman of the old boots and the old horse."

This being said, D'Artagnan called the host, and desired him to send his teal, oil-cake, and cider up to the room of the gentleman of modest exterior. He himself climbed, a plate in his hand, the wooden staircase which led to the chamber, and began to knock at the door.

"Come in!" said the unknown. D'Artagnan entered, with a simper on his lips, his plate under his arm, his hat in one hand, his candle in the other.

"Excuse me, Monsieur," said he; "I am, as you are, a traveller. I know no one in the hotel, and I have the bad habit of losing my spirits when I eat alone; so that my repast appears a bad one to me, and does not nourish me. Your face, which I saw just now, when you came down to have some oysters opened, — your face pleased me much. Besides, I have observed that you have a horse just like mine, and that the host, no doubt on account of that resemblance, has placed them side by side in the stable, where they appear to agree amazingly well. I therefore, Monsieur, cannot see why the masters should be separated when the horses are together. In consequence, I am come to request the pleasure of being admitted to your table. My name is Agnan at your service, Monsieur, the unworthy steward of a rich seigneur, who wishes to purchase some salt-mines in this country, and sends me to examine his future acquisitions. In truth, Monsieur, I should be well pleased if my countenance were as agreeable to you as yours is to me; for, upon my honor, I like you exceedingly."

The stranger, whom D'Artagnan saw for the first time, — for before he had only caught a glimpse of him, — the stranger had black and brilliant eyes, a yellow complexion, a brow a little wrinkled by the weight of fifty years, simplicity in his features collectively, but a little cunning in the glance of his eye.

"One would say," thought D'Artagnan, "that this merry fellow has never exercised more than the upper part of his head, his eyes, and his brain. He must be a man of science; his mouth, nose, and chin signify absolutely nothing."

"Monsieur," replied the latter, with whose mind and person we have been making so free, "you do me much honor. Not that I am ever low-spirited, for I have," added he, smiling, "company which amuses me always: but, never mind that, I am very happy to receive you." But while saying this, the man with the worn boots cast an uneasy look at his table, from which the oysters had disappeared, and upon which there was nothing left but a morsel of salt bacon.

"Monsieur," D'Artagnan hastened to say, "the host is bringing me up a fine piece of roasted poultry and a superb oil-cake." D'Artagnan had read in the look of his companion, however rapid it had been, the fear of an attack by a parasite; he guessed rightly. At this overture the features of the man of modest exterior relaxed; and as if he had watched the moment for his entrance, the host straightway appeared, bearing the dishes mentioned. The oil-cake and the teal were added to the morsel of broiled bacon; D'Artagnan and his guest bowed to each other, sat down face to face, and, like two brothers, shared the bacon and the other dishes.

"Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "you must confess that partnership is a wonderful thing."

"How so?" replied the stranger, with his mouth full.

"Well, I will tell you," replied D'Artagnan.

The stranger gave a short truce to the movement of his jaws, in order to hear the better.

"In the first place," continued D'Artagnan, "instead of one candle, which each of us had, we have two."

"That is true!" said the stranger, struck with the extreme justness of the observation.

"Then I see that you eat my oil-cake by preference, while I, by preference, eat your bacon."

"That is true, again."

"And then, besides the pleasure of being better lighted and eating things according to our taste, I add the pleasure of your company."

"Truly, Monsieur, you are very jovial," said the unknown, cheerfully.

"Yes, Monsieur, jovial, as all people are who carry nothing in their heads. Oh! I can see it is quite another sort of thing with you," continued D'Artagnan; "I can read in your eyes all sorts of genius."

"Oh, Monsieur!"

"Come, confess one thing."

"What is that?"

"That you are a learned man."

"Faith, Monsieur."

"Hey?"

"Almost."

"Come, then!"

"I am an author."

"There!" cried D'Artagnan, clapping his hands in delight; "I knew I could not be deceived! It is a miracle!"

"Monsieur —"

"What! shall I have the honor of passing the evening in the society of an author, — of a celebrated author, perhaps?"

"Oh!" said the unknown, blushing, "'celebrated,' Monsieur, 'celebrated' is not the word."

"Modest!" cried D'Artagnan, enraptured, "he is modest!" Then, turning towards the stranger, with an

air of blunt good nature, — "But tell me at least the names of your works, Monsieur; for you will please to observe you have not told me your own, and I have been forced to divine your genius."

"My name is Jupenet, Monsieur," said the author.

"A fine name! a fine name! upon my word; and I do not know why — pardon me the blunder, if it be one — but surely I have heard that name somewhere."

"I have made verses," said the poet, modestly.

"Ah! that is it, then; I have heard them read."

"A tragedy."

"I must have seen it played."

The poet blushed again, and said: "I do not think that can be the case, for my verses have not been printed."

"Well, then, it must have been the tragedy which acquainted me with your name."

"You are again mistaken, for the comedians of the Hôtel de Bourgogne would have nothing to do with it," said the poet, with the smile of which certain kinds of pride alone know the secret. D'Artagnan bit his lips. "Thus, then, you see, Monsieur," continued the poet, "you are in error on my account, and that, not being at all known to you, you have never heard me spoken of."

"And that confounds me. That name, Jupenet, appears to me, nevertheless, a fine name, and quite as worthy of being known as those of Corneille or Rotrou or Garnier. I hope, Monsieur, you will have the goodness to repeat to me a part of your tragedy presently, by way of dessert, for instance. That will be sugared toast, — *mordioux!* Ah! pardon me, Monsieur, that was a little oath which escaped me, because it is a habit with my lord and master. I sometimes allow myself to usurp that little oath, as it seems in good taste. I take this liberty only

in his absence, please to observe; for you may understand that in his presence — But, in truth, Monsieur, this cider is abominable, do you not think so? And besides, the pot is of such an irregular shape it will not stand on the table."

"Suppose we wedge it?"

"To be sure; but with what?"

"With this knife."

"And the teal, — with what shall we cut that up? Do you not mean to touch the teal?"

"Certainly."

"Well then — "

"Wait."

The poet rummaged in his pocket, and drew out a small piece of metal, oblong, quadrangular, about a line in thickness and an inch and a half in length. But scarcely had this little piece of metal seen the light, when the poet appeared to think he had committed an imprudence, and made a motion to put it back again in his pocket. D'Artagnan perceived this, — for he was a man whom nothing escaped. He stretched forth his hand towards the piece of metal: "Humph! that which you hold in your hand is pretty; may I look at it?"

"Certainly," said the poet, who appeared to have yielded too soon to a first impulse, — "certainly, you may look at it. But it will be in vain for you to look at it," added he, with a satisfied air; "if I were not to tell you the use of that, you would never guess it."

D'Artagnan had interpreted as a confession the hesitation of the poet, and his eagerness to conceal the piece of metal which a first impulse had induced him to take out of his pocket. His attention, therefore, once awakened on this point, he indued himself with a vigilance which gave him a superiority upon all occasions. Besides, what

ever M. Jupenet might say about it, by the simple inspection of the object, he had known perfectly what it was. It was a character used in printing.

"Can you guess, now, what this is?" continued the poet.

"No," said D'Artagnan; "no, faith!"

"Well, Monsieur," said M. Jupenet, "this little piece of metal is a printing letter."

"Bah!"

"A capital letter."

"Stop! stop! stop!" said D'Artagnan, opening his eyes very innocently.

"Yes, Monsieur, a capital J; the first letter of my name."

"And this is a letter, is it?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Well, I will confess one thing to you."

"And what is that?"

"No, I will not; I was going to say something very stupid."

"Oh, no!" said Master Jupenet, with a patronizing air.

"Well, then, I cannot comprehend, if that is a letter, how you can make a word."

"A word?"

"Yes, a printed word."

"Oh, that's very easy."

"Let me see."

"Does it interest you?"

"Enormously."

"Well, I will explain the thing to you. Attend!"

"I am attending."

"Here it is."

"Good!"

"Look attentively."

"I am looking." D'Artagnan, in fact, appeared absorbed in his contemplation. Jupenet drew from his pocket seven or eight other pieces of metal, but smaller than the first.

"Ah! ah!" said D'Artagnan.

"What?"

"You have, then, a whole printing-office in your pocket. *Peste!* that is curious indeed."

"Is it not?"

"Good God! what a number of things we learn by travelling!"

"To your health!" said Jupenet, quite enchanted.

"To yours, *mordioux!* to yours. But — an instant — not in this cider. It is an abominable drink, unworthy of a man who quenches his thirst at the Hippocrene fountain; is it not thus you call your fountain, you poets?"

"Yes, Monsieur, our fountain is indeed so called. That comes from two Greek words, — *hippos*, which means a horse, and —"

"Monsieur," interrupted D'Artagnan, "you shall drink of a liquor which comes from one single French word, and is none the worse for that, — from the word *grape;* this cider gives me the heartburn. Allow me to inquire of our host if there is not a good bottle of Beaugency, or of the Céran growth, at the back of the large bins of his cellar."

The host, being called, immediately attended.

"Monsieur," interrupted the poet, "take care! We shall not have time to drink the wine, unless we make great haste, for I must take advantage of the tide to take the boat."

"What boat?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Why, the boat which sets out for Belle-Isle."

"Ah! for Belle-Isle?" said the musketeer; "that is good."

"Bah! you will have plenty of time, Monsieur," replied the hotel-keeper, uncorking the bottle; "the boat will not leave this hour."

"But who will give me notice?" said the poet.

"Your neighbor," replied the host.

"But I scarcely know him."

"When you hear him going, it will be time for you to go."

"Is he going to Belle-Isle too?"

"Yes."

"The Monsieur who has a lackey?" asked D'Artagnan. "He is some gentleman, no doubt?"

"I know nothing of him."

"How! — know nothing of him?"

"No; all I know is, that he is drinking the same wine as this."

"*Peste!* that is a great honor for us," said D'Artagnan, filling his companion's glass, while the host went out.

"So," resumed the poet, returning to his ruling ideas, "you never saw any printing done?"

"Never."

"Well, then, take the letters thus, which compose the word, you see: *A b;* here is an *r*, two *e*'s, then a *g;*" and he arranged the letters with a swiftness and skill which did not escape the eye of D'Artagnan.

"*Abrégé*," said he, as he ended.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan. "Here are plenty of letters got together; but how are they kept so?" and he poured out a second glass for his host. M. Jupenet smiled like a man who has an answer for everything; then he pulled out — still from his pocket — a little metal instrument composed of two parts, arranged at right angles, against

which he put together in a straight line the characters, holding them under his left thumb.

"And what do you call that little iron ruler?" said D'Artagnan; "for, I suppose, all these things must have names."

"This is called a composing-stick," said Jupenet; "it is by the aid of this rule that the lines are formed."

"Come, then, I was not mistaken in what I said; you have a press in your pocket," said D'Artagnan, laughing with an air of simplicity so stupid that the poet was completely his dupe.

"No," replied he; "but I am too lazy to write, and when I have a verse in my head, I set it up all ready for printing. That is a labor spared."

"*Mordioux!*" thought D'Artagnan to himself, "this must be cleared up;" and under a pretext, which did not embarrass the musketeer, who was fertile in expedients, he left the table, went downstairs, ran to the shed under which stood the poet's little cart, and poked the point of his poniard into the stuff which enveloped one of the packages, which he found full of types, like those which the printer-poet had in his pocket.

"Humph!" said D'Artagnan, "I do not yet know whether M. Fouquet wishes to fortify Belle-Isle materially; but, at all events, here are some spiritual munitions for the castle." Then, rich in his discovery, he ran upstairs again to resume his place at the table.

D'Artagnan had learned what he wished to know. He none the less, however, remained face to face with his partner, to the moment when they heard from the next room the stirring about of a person ready to go out. The printer was immediately on foot; he had given orders for his horse to be harnessed. His carriage was waiting at the door. The second traveller got into his

saddle, in the courtyard, with his lackey. D'Artagnan followed Jupenet to the door. The printer embarked his cart and horse on board the boat. As to the opulent traveller, he did the same with his two horses and his servant. But all the wit D'Artagnan employed in endeavoring to find out his name was lost; he could learn nothing. Only, he took such notice of his countenance, that that countenance was engraved upon his memory forever. D'Artagnan had a great inclination to embark with the two travellers; but an interest more powerful than curiosity — that of success — repelled him from the shore, and brought him back again to the hostelry. He entered with a sigh, and went to bed directly, in order to be ready early in the morning with fresh ideas and the counsel of the night.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

D'ARTAGNAN CONTINUES HIS INVESTIGATIONS.

At daybreak D'Artagnan himself saddled Furet, who had fared sumptuously all the night, devouring the remainder of the corn left by his companions. The musketeer sifted all he could out of the host, whom he found cunning, mistrustful, and devoted, body and soul, to M. Fouquet. In order, then, not to awaken the suspicions of this man, he carried on his fable of being a probable purchaser of some salt-mines. To have embarked for Belle-Isle at La Roche-Bernard would have been to expose himself to comments which had perhaps been already made, and which would be carried to the castle. Moreover, it was singular that this traveller and his lackey should have remained a secret to D'Artagnan, in spite of all the questions addressed by him to the host, who appeared to know the man perfectly well. The musketeer then made some inquiries concerning the salt-mines, and took the road to the marshes, leaving the sea to his right, and penetrating into that vast and desolate plain which resembles a sea of mud, of which here and there a few crests of salt silver the undulations.

Furet progressed admirably, with his nervous little legs, along the foot-wide causeways which separate the salt-mines. D'Artagnan, aware of the consequences of a fall, which would result in a cold bath, allowed him to go as he liked, contenting himself with looking at three rocks in the distance, which rose up like lance-blades from the

bosom of the verdureless plain. Pirial, the market-town of Batz, and Le Croisic, exactly resembling each other, attracted and held his attention. If the traveller turned round, the better to make his observations, he saw in the other direction three other steeples, — Guérande, Le Poulighen, and St. Joachim, — which in their circumference represented a set of skittles, of which he and Furet were but the wandering ball. Pirial was the first little port on his right. He went thither, with the names of the principal salters in his mouth. At the moment when he arrived at the little port of Pirial, five large barges, laden with stone, were leaving it. It appeared strange to D'Artagnan that stones should be leaving a country where none are found. He had recourse to all of M. Agnan's affability to learn from the people of the port the cause of this singularity. An old fisherman replied to M. Agnan, that the stones very certainly did not come from Pirial or the marshes.

"Where do they come from, then?" naïvely asked the musketeer.

"Monsieur, they come from Nantes and Paimbœuf."

"Where are they going, then?"

"Monsieur, to Belle-Isle."

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, in the same tone he had assumed to tell the printer that his characters interested him; "are they building at Belle-Isle, then?"

"Why, yes, Monsieur; M. Fouquet has the walls of the castle repaired every year."

"Is it in ruins, then?"

"It is old."

"Thank you. The fact is," said D'Artagnan to himself, "nothing is more natural; every proprietor has a right to repair his property. It would be like telling me that I was fortifying the Image de Notre-Dame, when

I should be purely and simply obliged to make repairs. In truth, I believe false reports have been made to his Majesty, and he is very likely to be in the wrong."

"You must confess," continued he then, aloud, addressing the fisherman, — for his rôle of a suspicious man was imposed upon him by the very object of his mission, — "you must confess, my dear Monsieur, that those stones travel in a very curious fashion."

"How so?" said the fisherman.

"They come from Nantes or Paimbœuf by the Loire, do they not?"

"That is descending."

"That is convenient, — I don't say it is not; but why do they not go straight from St. Nazaire to Belle-Isle?"

"Eh! because the barges are bad boats, and are not seaworthy," replied the fisherman.

"That is not a reason."

"Pardon me, Monsieur, one may see that you have never been a sailor," added the fisherman, not without a sort of disdain.

"Pray explain that to me, my good man. It seems to me that to come from Paimbœuf to Pirial, and go from Pirial to Belle-Isle, is as if we went from La Roche-Bernard to Nantes, and from Nantes to Pirial."

"By water that would be the nearest way," replied the fisherman, imperturbably.

"But there is an elbow?"

The fisherman shook his head.

"The shortest road from one place to another is the straight line," continued D'Artagnan.

"You forget the tide, Monsieur."

"Well, take the tide."

"And the wind."

"Well, and the wind."

"Without doubt; the current of the Loire carries boats almost as far as Le Croisic. If they want to be repaired a little, or to recruit the crew, they come to Pirial along the coast; from Pirial they find another inverse current, which carries them to the Isle-Dumet, two leagues and a half."

"Granted."

"There the current of the Vilaine throws them upon another isle, the isle of Hoedic?"

"I agree to that."

"Well, Monsieur, from that isle to Belle-Isle the way is quite straight. The sea, broken both above and below, passes like a canal, like a mirror, between the two isles; the barges glide along upon it, don't you see, like ducks upon the Loire."

"It does not signify," said the obstinate M. Agnan; "it is very far about."

"Ah, yes; but M. Fouquet will have it so," replied the fisherman in conclusion, taking off his woollen cap at the enunciation of that respected name.

A look from D'Artagnan, a look as keen and piercing as a sword-blade, found nothing in the heart of the old man but simple confidence, on his features nothing but satisfaction and indifference. He said, "M. Fouquet will have it so," as he would have said, "God has willed it."

D'Artagnan had already gone too far in this direction; besides, the barges having departed, there remained at Pirial nothing but a single boat, — that of the old man, — and it did not look fit for sea without great preparation. D'Artagnan therefore aroused Furet, who, as a new proof of his charming character, resumed his march, with his feet in the salt-mines, and his nose to the dry wind which bends the furze and the scanty heather of this country. D'Artagnan reached Le Croisic about five o'clock.

If D'Artagnan had been a poet, it would have been a beautiful spectacle, that of the immense strand of a league or more, which the sea covers at high tide, and which at the reflux appears gray, desolate, spread over with star-fishes and dead seaweed, with its pebbles sparse and white, like the bones in some vast cemetery. But the soldier, the politician, and the ambitious man had no longer the sweet consolation of looking towards heaven, to read there a hope or a warning. A red sky signifies nothing to such men but wind and storm. White and fleecy clouds upon the azure only say that the sea will be smooth and peaceful. D'Artagnan found the sky blue, the breeze balmy with saline perfumes, and he said, "I will embark with the first tide, if it be but in a nutshell."

At Le Croisic, as at Pirial, he had noticed enormous heaps of stone lying along the strand. These gigantic walls, demolished at every tide by the transports going to Belle-Isle, were, in the eyes of the musketeer, the consequence and the proof of what he had so well divined at Pirial. Was it a wall that M. Fouquet was rebuilding? — was it a fortification that he was erecting? To ascertain this, he must see it. D'Artagnan put Furet into a stable, supped, went to bed, and on the morrow took a walk upon the quay, or rather upon the shingle. Le Croisic has a quay fifty feet long; it has a look-out which resembles an enormous *brioche* [a kind of cake] elevated on a dish. The flat strand is the dish. Hundreds of barrowsful of earth, solidified with the pebbles, and rounded into cones, with sinuous passages between, make the look-out and the *brioche* at the same time. It is so now, it was so two hundred years ago; only, the *brioche* was less large, and probably there were not to be seen trellises of lath around the *brioche*, which constitute the ornament of it, and which the ædileship of that poor and pious little market-town

has planted like hand-rails along the snail-like passages winding towards the little terrace. Upon the shingle were three or four fishermen talking about sardines and shrimps. D'Artagnan, his eye animated with rough gayety, and a smile upon his lips, approached these fishermen.

"Any fishing going on to-day?" said he.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied one of them; "we are only waiting for the tide."

"Where do you fish, my friends?"

"Upon the coasts, Monsieur."

"Which are the best coasts?"

"Ah, that depends upon circumstances. Around the isles, for example."

"Yes; but they are a long way off, those isles, are they not?"

"Not very; four leagues."

"Four leagues! That is a voyage."

The fishermen laughed out in M. Agnan's face.

"Hear me, then," said the latter, with an air of simple stupidity; "four leagues off you lose sight of land, do you not?"

"Why, not always."

"Ah! it is a long way, — too long, or else I would have asked you to take me aboard, and to show me what I have never seen."

"What is that?"

"A live sea-fish."

"Monsieur is from the province?" said a fisherman.

"Yes, I come from Paris."

The Breton shrugged his shoulders; then, "Have you ever seen M. Fouquet in Paris?" asked he.

"Often," replied D'Artagnan.

"Often!" repeated the fishermen, closing their circle round the Parisian. "Do you know him?"

"A little; he is the intimate friend of my master."

"Ah!" exclaimed the fishermen.

"And," said D'Artagnan, "I have seen his châteaux at St. Mandé and at Vaux, and his hotel in Paris."

"Is that a fine place?"

"Superb."

"It is not so fine a place as Belle-Isle," said a fisherman.

"Bah!" replied M. Aguan, breaking into a laugh so disdainful that he angered all his auditors.

"It is very plain that you have never seen Belle-Isle," returned the most curious of the fishermen. "Do you know that there are six leagues of it, and that there are such trees on it as cannot be equalled even at Nantes-sur-le-Fossé?"

"Trees in the sea!" cried D'Artagnan. "Well, I should like to see them."

"That can be easily done. We are fishing at the Isle de Hoedic, — come with us. From that place you will see, as a Paradise, the black trees of Belle-Isle against the sky; you will see the white line of the castle, which cuts the horizon of the sea like a blade."

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "that must be fine! But do you know there are a hundred belfries at M. Fouquet's château at Vaux?"

The Breton raised his head in profound admiration, but he was not convinced. "A hundred belfries! That may be; but Belle-Isle is finer than that. Would you like to see Belle-Isle?"

"Is that possible?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes, with the permission of the governor."

"But I do not know the governor."

"As you know M. Fouquet, you can tell your name."

"Oh, my friends, I am not a gentleman."

"Everybody enters Belle-Isle," continued the fisherman, in his strong, pure language, "provided he means no harm to Belle-Isle or its master."

A slight shudder passed over the body of the musketeer. "That is true," thought he; then recovering himself, "if I were sure," said he, "not to be sea-sick."

"What! upon her?" said the fisherman, pointing with pride to his pretty, round-bottomed boat.

"Well, you almost persuade me," cried M. Agnan; "I will go and see Belle-Isle, but they will not admit me."

"We shall enter, safe enough."

"You! What for?"

"Why, *dame!* to sell fish to the corsairs."

"Hey! corsairs! — what do you mean?"

"I mean that M. Fouquet is having two corsairs built to chase the Dutch or the English, and we sell our fish to the crews of those little vessels."

"Come, come!" said D'Artagnan to himself; "better and better. A printing-press, bastions, and corsairs! Well, M. Fouquet is not an enemy to be despised, as I had presumed. He is worth the trouble of travelling to see him nearer."

"We set out at half-past five," added the fisherman, gravely.

"I am quite ready, and I will not leave you now." So D'Artagnan saw the fishermen haul their boats with a windlass to meet the tide. The tide came in. M. Agnan managed to climb on board, not without feigning a little fear and awkwardness, to the amusement of the young sea-urchins who watched him with their large intelligent eyes. He lay down upon a folded sail, and remained entirely inactive, while the boat prepared for sea; within two hours it was ready to sail. The fishermen, who pros-

ecuted their occupation as they proceeded, did not perceive that their passenger had not become pale, had neither groaned nor suffered; that, in spite of the horrible tossing and rolling of the boat, to which no hand imparted direction, the novice passenger had preserved his presence of mind and his appetite. They fished, and their fishing was sufficiently fortunate. To lines baited with prawns, soles and plaice came, with numerous gambols, to bite. Two nets had already been broken by the immense weight of congers and cod; three sea-eels ploughed the hold with their slimy folds in their dying contortions. D'Artagnan brought them good luck; they told him so. The soldier found the occupation so pleasant that he put his hand to the work — that is to say, to the lines — and uttered roars of joy, and *mordioux* enough to have astonished his musketeers themselves, every time that a shock given to his line by a captured prey tugged at the muscles of his arm, and required the employment of his strength and skill. The pleasure party had made him forget his diplomatic mission. He was struggling with a frightful conger, and holding fast with one hand to the side of the vessel in order to seize with the other the gaping jowl of his antagonist, when the skipper said to him, "Take care they don't see you from Belle-Isle!"

These words produced the same effect upon D'Artagnan as the hissing of the first bullets on a day of battle: he let go of both line and conger, which, one dragging the other, returned again to the water. D'Artagnan perceived, within half a league at most, the blue and marked profile of the rocks of Belle-Isle, overtowered by the white and majestic line of the castle; in the distance, the land with its forests and verdant plains; in the pastures, cattle. This was what first attracted the attention of the musketeer. The sun, risen half-way to the meridian, darted its

rays of gold upon the sea, raising a shining mist or dust around this enchanted isle. Nothing could be seen of it, owing to this dazzling light, but the flattened points; every shadow was strongly marked, and striped with a band of darkness the luminous sheet of the fields and the walls. "Well!" said D'Artagnan, at the aspect of those masses of black rocks, "these are fortifications, it seems to me, which do not stand in need of any engineer to render a landing difficult. Where the devil could a landing be effected on that isle which God has defended so completely?"

"This way," replied the skipper of the boat, changing the sail, and imparting to the rudder a twist which turned the boat in the direction of a pretty little harbor, quite coquettish, quite round, and quite newly battlemented.

"What the devil do I see yonder?" said D'Artagnan.

"You see Locmaria," replied the fisherman.

"Well, but there?"

"That is Bangos."

"And farther on?"

"Saujen, and then the palace."

"*Mordioux!* it is a world! Ah! there are some soldiers."

"There are seventeen hundred men in Belle-Isle, Monsieur," replied the fisherman, proudly. "Do you know that the smallest garrison has twenty companies of infantry?"

"*Mordioux!*" cried D'Artagnan to himself, stamping with his foot; "his Majesty was right enough." They landed.

CHAPTER LXIX.

IN WHICH THE READER, NO DOUBT, WILL BE AS ASTONISHED AS D'ARTAGNAN WAS TO MEET WITH AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

THERE is always in a landing, if it be only from the smallest sea-boat, a bustle and a confusion which do not leave to the mind the liberty which it needs in order to study at the first glance the new place that is presented to it. The movable bridges, the excited sailors, the noise of the water upon the pebbles, the cries and the importunities of those who are waiting on the shore, are the multiple details of that sensation which is summed up in one single word, — hesitation.

It was not, then, till after D'Artagnan had disembarked and stood several minutes on the shore that he saw at the harbor, but more particularly in the interior of the isle, an immense number of workmen in motion. At his feet he recognized the five barges laden with rough stone which he had seen leave the port of Pirial. The stones were transported to the shore by means of a chain formed by twenty-five or thirty peasants. The large stones were loaded upon carts which conveyed them in the same direction as the shards, — that is to say, towards the works, of which D'Artagnan could as yet appreciate neither the strength nor the extent. Everywhere prevailed an activity equal to that which Telemachus observed on his landing at Salentum.

D'Artagnan felt a strong inclination to penetrate into

the interior; but he could not, without danger of exciting mistrust, exhibit too much curiosity. He advanced, then, with exceeding caution, scarcely going beyond the line formed by the fishermen on the beach, observing everything, saying nothing, and meeting all suspicions that might have been excited with a half-silly question or a polite bow. And yet, while his companions carried on their trade, giving or selling their fish to the workmen or the inhabitants of the town, D'Artagnan had gained ground by degrees, and, reassured by the little attention paid to him, began to cast an intelligent and confident look upon the men and things that appeared before his eyes. And his very first glance fell upon earthworks in which the eye of a soldier could not be mistaken. In the first place, at the two extremities of the port, in order to cover the great axis of the ellipsis formed by the basin, two batteries had been raised, evidently destined to receive flank pieces; for D'Artagnan saw the workmen finishing the platforms and making ready the half-circle of wood upon which the wheels of the pieces might turn so as to command every direction over the ramparts. By the side of each of these batteries other workmen were strengthening gabions filled with earth, the lining of another battery. The latter had embrasures, and a superintendent of the works called up in succession the men who, with cords, tied the saucissons, and those who cut the lozenges and right angles of turf destined to retain the matting of the embrasures. By the activity displayed in these works, already so far advanced, they might be considered as completed; they were not yet furnished with their cannon, but the platforms had their beds and their planks all prepared; the earth, beaten carefully, had consolidated them; and, supposing the artillery to be on the island, in less than two or three days the port might be completely

armed. What astonished D'Artagnan, when he turned his eyes from the coast batteries to the fortifications of the town, was to see that Belle-Isle was defended by an entirely new system, of which he had often heard the Comte de la Fère speak as a great advancement, but of which he had never yet seen the application. These fortifications belonged neither to the Dutch method of Marollais, nor to the French method of the Chevalier Antoine de Ville, but to the system of Manesson Mallet, a skilful engineer, who about six or eight years before had quitted the service of Portugal to enter that of France. These works had the peculiarity that instead of rising above the earth, as did the ancient ramparts destined to defend a city from escalades, they, on the contrary, sank into it; and the depth of the ditches served instead of the height of walls. It did not take long to make D'Artagnan perceive the superiority of such a system, which gives no advantage to cannon. Besides, as the ditches were lower than the sea, or on a level with it, they might be inundated by subterranean sluices. Otherwise, the works were almost complete; and a group of workmen, receiving orders from a man who appeared to be the superintendent of the works, were occupied in placing the last stones. A bridge of planks, thrown over the ditch for greater convenience in using the barrows, joined the interior to the exterior. With an air of simple curiosity, D'Artagnan asked if he might be permitted to cross the bridge, and he was told that no order prevented it. Consequently he crossed the bridge, and advanced towards the group.

This group was superintended by the man whom D'Artagnan had already remarked, and who appeared to be the engineer-in-chief. A plan was lying open before him upon a large stone forming a table, and at some paces from him a crane was in action. This engineer, who by

his evident importance first attracted the attention of D'Artagnan, wore a coat which from its sumptuousness was scarcely in harmony with the work he was employed in, which would rather have required the costume of a master mason than of a noble. He was, furthermore, a man of high stature and large square shoulders, and he wore a hat covered with plumes. He gesticulated in the most majestic manner, and appeared — for only his back was seen — to be scolding the workmen for their idleness and want of strength.

D'Artagnan continued to draw nearer. At that moment the man with the plumes had ceased to gesticulate, and, with his hands placed upon his knees, was following, half bent, the efforts of six workmen who were trying to raise a block of hewn stone to the top of a piece of timber destined to support the stone, so that the cord of the crane might be passed under it. The six men, all on one side of the stone, united their efforts to raise it eight or ten inches from the ground, sweating and blowing; while a seventh got ready, as soon as there should be daylight enough beneath it, to slide in the roller that was to support it. But the stone had already twice escaped from their hands before gaining a sufficient height for the roller to be introduced. It may well be believed that every time the stone escaped them, they bounded quickly backwards, to keep their feet from being crushed by the falling stone. Moreover, each time that the stone was relinquished by them, it sank deeper and deeper into the damp earth, which rendered the operation more and more difficult. A third effort was attended by no better success, but with increasing discouragement. And yet, when the six men were bent over the stone, the man with the plumes had himself, with a powerful voice, given the word of command, "Steady!" which

guides all manœuvres of strength. Then he drew himself up.

"Come now!" said he, "what is all this about? Have I to do with men of straw? *Corbœuf!* stand on one side, and you shall see how this is to be done."

"*Peste!*" said D'Artagnan, "will he pretend to raise that rock? That would be a sight worth looking at."

The workmen, as commanded by the engineer, drew back, crestfallen and shaking their heads, with the exception of the one who held the joist, who prepared to perform his office. The man with the plumes went up to the stone, stooped, slipped his hands under the face lying upon the ground, stiffened his herculean muscles, and without a jerk, but with a slow motion like that of a machine, lifted the end of the rock a foot from the ground. The workman who held the joist profited by the space thus given him, and slipped the roller under the stone.

"That's the way," said the giant, not letting the rock fall again, but placing it upon its support.

"*Mordioux!*" cried D'Artagnan, "I know but one man capable of such a feat of strength."

"Hey?" said the colossus, turning round.

"Porthos!" murmured D'Artagnan, seized with amazement; "Porthos at Belle-Isle!"

On his part, the man with the plumes fixed his eyes upon the pretended steward, and, in spite of his disguise, recognized him. "D'Artagnan!" exclaimed he; and the color mounted to his face. "Hush!" said he to D'Artagnan.

"Hush!" in his turn said the musketeer.

In fact, if Porthos had just been discovered by D'Artagnan, D'Artagnan had just been discovered by Porthos. Their share in each other's particular secret struck them both at the same time. Nevertheless, the first move of the two men was to throw their arms round each other.

What they wished to conceal from the bystanders was not their friendship, but their names. But after the embrace came reflection.

"Why the devil is Porthos at Belle-Isle lifting stones?" said D'Artagnan; only, D'Artagnan uttered that question to himself in a low voice.

Less strong in diplomacy than his friend, Porthos thought aloud. "How the devil did you come to Belle-Isle?" asked he of D'Artagnan, "and what do you come to do here?"

It was necessary to reply without hesitation. To hesitate in his answer to Porthos would have been a check for which the self love of D'Artagnan could never have consoled itself. "*Pardieu!* my friend, I am at Belle-Isle because you are here."

"Oh, bah!" said Porthos, visibly astounded by the statement, and seeking to account for it to himself, with that clearness of deduction which we know to be characteristic of him.

"Besides," continued D'Artagnan, unwilling to give his friend time to recollect himself, "I have been to see you at Pierrefonds."

"Indeed!"

"Yes."

"And you did not find me there?"

"No; but I found Mouston."

"Is he well?"

"*Peste!*"

"Well, but Mouston did not tell you I was here."

"Why should he not? Have I, perchance, deserved to lose his confidence?"

"No; but he did not know it."

"Well, that is a reason at least not offensive to my self-love."

"But how did you manage to find me?"

"My dear friend, a great noble, like you, always leaves traces of his passage; and I should think but poorly of myself if I were not sharp enough to follow the traces of my friends." This explanation, flattering as it was, did not entirely satisfy Porthos.

"But I left no traces behind me, as I came here disguised," said Porthos.

"Ah! You came disguised, did you?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"And how?"

"As a miller."

"And do you think a great noble like you, Porthos, can affect common manners so as to deceive people?"

"Well, I swear to you, my friend, that I played my part so well that everybody was deceived."

"Indeed! so well that I have not discovered and rejoined you?"

"Yes; but how have you discovered and rejoined me?"

"Stop a bit! I was going to tell you how. Do you imagine that Mouston — "

"Ah! it was that fellow, Mouston," said Porthos, gathering together those two triumphal arches which served him for eyebrows.

"But, stop, I tell you! It was no fault of Mouston's, because he was ignorant himself of where you were."

"I know he was; and that is why I am in such haste to understand —"

"Oh, how impatient you are, Porthos!"

"When I do not comprehend, I am terrible."

"Well, you will understand. Aramis wrote to you at Pierrefonds, did he not?"

"Yes."

"And he told you to come before the equinox."

"That is true."

"Well, that is it," said D'Artagnan, hoping that this reason would satisfy Porthos.

Porthos appeared to give himself up to violent mental labor. "Yes, yes," said he, "I understand. As Aramis told me to come before the equinox, you have understood that that was to join him. You then inquired where Aramis was, saying to yourself, 'Where Aramis is, there Porthos will be.' You have learned that Aramis was in Bretagne, and you said to yourself, 'Porthos is in Bretagne.'"

"Exactly! In truth, Porthos, I cannot tell why you have not turned soothsayer. So you understand that, arriving at La Roche-Bernard, I heard of the splendid fortifications going on at Belle-Isle. The account that they gave me raised my curiosity. I embarked in a fishing-boat, without dreaming that you were here. I came, and I saw a fine fellow lifting a stone which Ajax could not have stirred. I cried out, 'Nobody but the Baron de Bracieux could have performed such a feat of strength.' You heard me, you turned round, you recognized me, we embraced; and, faith! if you like, my dear friend, we will embrace again."

"Ah! now it is all explained," said Porthos; and he embraced D'Artagnan with so much affection as to deprive the musketeer of his breath for five minutes.

"Why, you are stronger than ever," said D'Artagnan, "and still, fortunately, in your arms."

Porthos greeted D'Artagnan with a gracious smile. During the five minutes in which D'Artagnan was recovering his breath, he reflected that he had a very difficult part to play. It was necessary that he should question without ever replying. By the time his respiration returned, his plan of the campaign had been made.

CHAPTER LXX.

WHEREIN THE IDEAS OF D'ARTAGNAN, AT FIRST VERY CONFUSED, BEGIN TO CLEAR UP A LITTLE.

D'ARTAGNAN immediately took the offensive. "Now that I have told you all, dear friend, or rather now that you have guessed all, tell me what you are doing here, covered with dust and mud."

Porthos wiped his brow, and looked around him with pride. "Why, I should think," said he, "that you might see what I am doing here."

"No doubt, no doubt; you lift great stones."

"Oh, to show these idle fellows what a man is!" said Porthos, with contempt. "But you understand —"

"Yes; that it is not your place to lift stones, although there are many, whose place it is, who cannot lift them as you do. It was that which made me ask you, just now, what you are doing here, Baron."

"I am studying topography, Chevalier."

"You are studying topography?"

"Yes; but you — what are you doing in that common dress?"

D'Artagnan perceived he had committed a fault in giving expression to his astonishment. Porthos had taken advantage of it, to retort with a question. Fortunately D'Artagnan was expecting this question. "Why," said he, "you know I am a bourgeois, in fact; my dress, then, has nothing astonishing in it, since it conforms to my condition."

"Nonsense! you are a musketeer."

"You are wrong, my friend; I have given in my resignation."

"Bah!"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* yes."

"And have you abandoned the service?"

"I have quitted it."

"You have abandoned the king?"

"Quite."

Porthos raised his arms towards heaven, like a man who has heard extraordinary news. "Well, that does confound me," said he.

"It is nevertheless true."

"And what could have led you to form such a resolution?"

"The king displeased me. Mazarin had disgusted me for a long time, as you know; so I threw my uniform to the nettles."

"But Mazarin is dead."

"I know that well enough, *parbleu!* Only, at the period of his death, my resignation had been given in and accepted two months. Then, feeling myself free, I set off for Pierrefonds, to see my dear Porthos. I had heard of the happy division you had made of your time, and I wished for a fortnight to divide mine after your fashion."

"My friend, you know that it is not for a fortnight the house is open to you; it is for a year, — for ten years, — for life."

"Thank you, Porthos."

"Ah! you don't want any money, do you?" said Porthos, making something like fifty louis chink in his pocket. "In that case, you know —"

"No, thank you; I am not in want of anything. I

placed my savings with Planchet, who pays me the interest of them."

"Your savings?"

"Yes, to be sure," said D'Artagnan; "why should I not put by savings, as well as another, Porthos?"

"Oh, there is no reason why; on the contrary, I always suspected you — that is to say, Aramis always suspected you — to have savings. For my own part, d' ye see, I take no concern about the management of my household; but I presume the savings of a musketeer must be small."

"No doubt, relative to yourself, Porthos, who are a millionnaire; but you shall judge. I had laid by twenty-five thousand livres."

"That 's pretty well," said Porthos, with an affable air.

"And," continued D'Artagnan, "on the 28th of last month I added to it two hundred thousand livres more."

Porthos opened his great eyes, which eloquently demanded of the musketeer, "Where the devil did you steal such a sum as that, my dear friend?" "Two hundred thousand livres!" cried he, at length.

"Yes; which, with the twenty-five I had, and twenty thousand I have about me, complete the sum of two hundred and forty-five thousand livres."

"But tell me, whence comes this fortune?"

"I will tell you all about it presently, dear friend; but as you have, in the first place, many things to tell me yourself, let us place my narration in its proper rank."

"Bravo!" said Porthos; "then we are both rich. But what can I have to tell you?"

"You have to tell me how Aramis came to be named —"

"Ah! bishop of Vannes."

"That 's it," said D'Artagnan, "bishop of Vannes. Dear Aramis! do you know how he succeeded so well?"

"Yes, yes; without considering that he does not mean to stop there."

"What! do you think he will not be contented with violet stockings, and that he wants a red hat?"

"Hush! that is promised him."

"Bah! by the king?"

"By somebody more powerful than the king."

"Oh, the devil! Porthos, what incredible things you tell me, my friend!"

"Why incredible? Is there not always somebody in France more powerful than the king?"

"Oh, yes! in the time of King Louis XIII. it was the Duc de Richelieu; in the time of the regency it was Cardinal Mazarin; in the time of Louis XIV; it is M. —"

"Go on."

"It is M. Fouquet."

"Jove! you have hit it the first time."

"So it is M. Fouquet who has promised Aramis the hat?"

Porthos assumed an air of reserve. "Dear friend," said he, "God preserve me from meddling with the affairs of others, above all from revealing secrets it may be to their interests to keep! When you see Aramis, he will tell you what he thinks he ought to tell you."

"You are right, Porthos; and you are quite a padlock for safety. But to revert to yourself?"

"Yes," said Porthos.

"You said just now that you came hither to study topography?"

"I did so."

"*Tudieu!* my friend, what fine things you will do!"

"How do you mean?"

"Why, these fortifications are admirable."

"Is that your opinion?"

"Certainly. In truth, to anything but a regular siege, Belle-Isle is impregnable."

Porthos rubbed his hands. "That is my opinion," said he.

"But who the devil has fortified this paltry little place in this manner?"

Porthos drew himself up proudly: "Did not I tell you who?"

"No."

"Do you not suspect?"

"No; all that I can say is that he is a man who has studied all the systems, and who appears to me to have stopped at the best."

"Hush!" said Porthos; "consider my modesty, my dear d'Artagnan!"

"Really," replied the musketeer, "can it be you — who — oh!"

"Pray, my dear friend — "

"You who have imagined, traced, and contrived these bastions, these redans, these curtains, these half-moons, and are preparing that covered way?"

"I beg you — "

"You who have built that lunette with its retiring angles and its salient angles?"

"My friend — "

"You who have given that inclination to the openings of your embrasures, by means of which you so effectively protect the men who serve the guns?"

"Eh! *mon Dieu!* yes."

"Oh, Porthos, Porthos! I must bow down before you, I must admire you! But you have always con-

cealed from us this superior genius. I hope, my dear friend, you will show me all this in detail?"

"Nothing more easy. There is my plan."

"Show it me."

Porthos led D'Artagnan towards the stone which served him for a table, and upon which the plan was spread. At the foot of the plan was written, in the formidable writing of Porthos, of which we have already had occasion to speak: —

"Instead of making use of the square or rectangle, as has been done up to this time, you will suppose your place enclosed in a regular hexagon, this polygon having the advantage of offering more angles than the quadrilateral. Every side of your hexagon, of which you will determine the length in proportion to the dimensions taken upon the place, will be divided into two parts, and upon the middle point you will draw a perpendicular towards the centre of the polygon, which will equal in length the sixth part of the side. At the extremities of each side of the polygon, you will trace two diagonals, which will cut the perpendicular. These two straight lines will form the lines of defence."

"The devil!" said D'Artagnan, stopping at this point of the demonstration; "why, this is a complete system, Porthos."

"Entirely," said Porthos. "Do you wish to continue?"

"No, I have read enough of it; but since it is you, my dear Porthos, who direct the works, what need have you of setting down your system so formally in writing?"

"Oh, my dear friend, death!"

"How! death?"

"Why, we are all mortal."

"That is true," said D'Artagnan; "you have an answer for everything, my friend;" and he replaced the plan upon the stone.

But however short the time he had the plan in his hands, D'Artagnan had been able to distinguish, under the enormous writing of Porthos, a much more delicate hand, which reminded him of certain letters to Marie Michon, with which he had been acquainted in his youth. Only, the India-rubber had passed and repassed over this writing, so that it might have escaped a less practised eye than that of our musketeer.

"Bravo! my friend, bravo!" said D'Artagnan.

"And now you know all that you want to know, do you not?" said Porthos, wheeling about.

"*Mon Dieu*, yes; only do me one last favor, dear friend!"

"Speak! I am master here."

"Do me the pleasure to tell me the name of that gentleman who is walking yonder."

"Where? there?"

"Behind the soldiers."

"Followed by a lackey?"

"Exactly."

"In company with a mean sort of fellow dressed in black?"

"Yes; I mean him."

"That is M. Gétard?"

"And who is Gétard, my friend?"

"He is the architect of the house."

"Of what house?"

"Of M. Fouquet's house."

"Ah!" cried D'Artagnan; "you are of the household of M. Fouquet, then, Porthos?"

"I! what do you mean by that?" said the topographer, blushing to the tips of his ears.

"Why, you say 'the house,' when speaking of Belle-Isle, as if you were speaking of the château of Pierrefonds."

Porthos bit his lips. "Belle-Isle, my friend," said he, "belongs to M. Fouquet, does it not?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"As Pierrefonds belongs to me!"

"Certainly."

"You have been at Pierrefonds?"

"I told you that I was there not two months ago."

"Did you ever see a man there who is accustomed to walk about with a ruler in his hand?"

"No; but I might have seen him there, if he really walked there."

"Well, that gentleman is M. Boulingrin."

"Who is M. Boulingrin?"

"Now we come to it. If, when this gentleman is walking with a ruler in his hand, any one should ask me, 'Who is M. Boulingrin?' I should reply: 'He is the architect of the house.' Well! M. Gétard is the Boulingrin of M. Fouquet. But he has nothing to do with the fortifications, which are my department alone, do you understand? — absolutely nothing."

"Ah, Porthos," exclaimed D'Artagnan, letting his arms fall as a conquered man gives up his sword; "ah, my friend, you are not only a herculean topographer, you are, still further, a dialectician of the first water."

"Was it not powerfully reasoned?" said Porthos; and he puffed and blew like the conger which D'Artagnan had let slip from his hand that morning.

"And now," continued D'Artagnan, "that shabby-looking man who accompanies M. Gétard, is he also of the household of M. Fouquet?"

"Oh, yes," said Porthos, with contempt; "it is one M. Jupenet, or Juponet, a sort of poet."

"Who has come to establish himself here?"

"I believe so."

"I thought M. Fouquet had poets enough, yonder, — Scudéri, Loret, Pellisson, La Fontaine? If I must tell you the truth, Porthos, that poet disgraces you."

"Eh! my friend; but what saves us is that he is not here as a poet."

"As what, then, is he?"

"As printer. And you make me remember that I have a word to say to the dirty pedant."

"Say it, then."

Porthos made a sign to Jupenet, who clearly recognized D'Artagnan, and did not care to come nearer, — which naturally produced another sign from Porthos. This was so imperative that he was obliged to obey. As he approached, "Come hither!" said Porthos. "You landed only yesterday, and you have begun your tricks already."

"How so, Monsieur the Baron?" asked Jupenet, trembling.

"Your press was groaning all night, Monsieur," said Porthos, "and you prevented my sleeping, *corbœuf!*"

"Monsieur — " objected Jupenet, timidly.

"You have nothing yet to print; therefore you have no occasion to set your press going. What did you print last night?"

"Monsieur, a light poem of my own composition."

"Light! Nousense, Monsieur; the press groaned pitifully with it. Let that not happen again!"

"No, Monsieur."

"You promise me?"

"I do, Monsieur."

"Very well; this time I pardon you. Adieu!"

The poet withdrew with the same humility he had exhibited on coming up.

"Well, now we have combed that fellow's head, let us breakfast."

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan, "let us breakfast."

"Only," said Porthos, "I beg you to observe, my friend, that we have only two hours for our repast."

"What would you have? We will try to make it answer. But why have you only two hours?"

"Because it is high tide at one o'clock, and with the tide I am going to start for Vannes. But as I shall return to-morrow, my dear friend, you can stay here. You shall be master. I have a good cook and a good cellar."

"No," interrupted D'Artagnan; "better than that!"

"What?"

"You are going to Vannes, you say?"

"To a certainty."

"To see Aramis?"

"Yes."

"Well, I came from Paris on purpose to see Aramis."

"That 's true."

"I will go with you, then."

"Do; that 's the thing."

"Only, I ought to have seen Aramis first, and you after. But man proposes, and God disposes. I have begun with you, and will finish with Aramis."

"Very well."

"And in how many hours can you go from hence to Vannes?"

"Oh! *pardieu!* in six hours. Three hours by sea from here to Sarzeau, three hours by road from Sarzeau to Vannes."

"How convenient that is! Being so near to the bishopric, do you often go to Vannes?"

"Yes; once a week. But stop till I get my plan."

Porthos picked up his plan, folded it carefully, and engulfed it in his large pocket.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan, aside; "I think I now know the true engineer who is fortifying Belle-Isle."

Two hours after, at high tide, Porthos and D'Artagnan set out for Sarzeau.